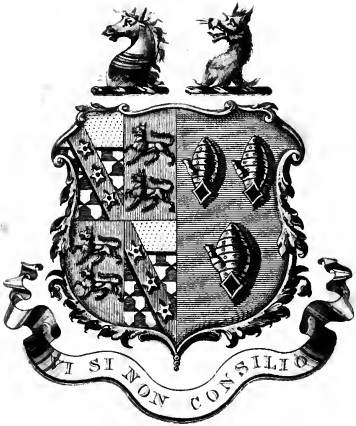

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Oxton.

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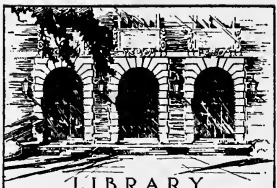

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JESSY.

A TALE.

Printed by J. Darling, Leadenhall-Street, London.

JESSY;

OR, THE

ROSE OF DONALD'S COTTAGE.

A Tale.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF THE BRAVO OF BOHEMIA, &c.

'Tis Nature's most inviolable law,
To make each species propagate its kind:
The generous offspring from the generous stock
Derive the virtues, and confess the sire.

HIGGON.

VOL. I.

London:
Printed at the Minerva Press for
A. K. NEWMAN AND CO. LEADENHALL-STREET.
1818.

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TO

LADY COPE SHERBROOKE.

MADAM,

WITH that timidity an author can scarcely fail to experience in offering her first production to a British public, famed as is their generous support and liberal encouragement of rising merit, I ventured some few years since to enter the list of candidates for their favour, by the presen-

tation of a small work, which had but few claims to their notice, sanguine in its success as far only as depended upon the lenity which might be extended towards it.

At the entreaty of many friends, desirous of obtaining a local description of New Brunswick, which my residence in the province enabled me to give with tolerable accuracy, I was induced to hazard the fate of a second work, under the favourable auspices of our late worthy president, Lieutenant-General HUNTER.

But no such plea authorized a third

intrusion

intrusion upon the indulgence hitherto extended to the writings of an unknown author; and the "ROSE OF DONALD'S COTTAGE" would have long continued in its obscurity, had not the condescending goodness of Lady SHERBROOKE transplanted it into the Literary Parterre, where, supported by her fostering hand, it may be permitted to raise its humble head, and bloom its little season, among the more *lasting* and *distinguished* Flowers of Genius and Merit, since the mild virtues of her amiable character, adding the brightest lustre to her title, and endearing her to every class happily situated near

her

her person, cannot, while so justly demanding the respect and admiration due to her exemplary worth, fail to influence the opinion of those whose knowledge of her own highly cultivated mind may induce them to scan the merits of her favoured *protégée.*

But in consigning it to your Ladyship's protecting care, some few remarks are necessary, lest it should hereafter occur, that your promised patronage has been extended to the trifling production of hours which a wife and mother might have appropriated to more useful purposes. Under

der this impression, permit me to assure you, that the advantage of children, dear to me by every tie of nature and affection, every valuable quality of the heart, which can raise them in the estimation of a parent, has been the greatest stimulus to the exertion of my pen; and aware how readily the juvenile mind is led to adopt what most excites its admiration, I have devoted many hours, which might have been unprofitably wasted in sleep, in forming for their amusement unvarnished tales, in which I have uniformly endeavoured to place *Virtue* and *Vice* in such

points

points of view, that while the fiction was calculated to please and interest the youthful imagination, it could neither mislead their principles, nor endanger their judgment, carefully adhering to the representation of such characters as they will constantly meet with in real life: and these motives will, I trust, not only exonerate me from a neglect of duty while thus employed, but justify your assertion, Madam, that I would only employ my pen in the defence of Virtue and Humanity; while the gratifying assurance that you really believe this will render me still more ambitious

of

of continuing to merit the generous opinion you have formed of

Your Ladyship's

Most obedient

Humble Servant,

THE AUTHOR.

St. John's, New Brunswick,
North America.

JESSY.

CHAPTER I.

TWICE had the little casement of Donald's cottage been opened with anxious solicitude by his faithful Margretta, as she listened in expectation of his well-known step—not a sound broke on the solemn stillness of the fast-closing evening, save the faint echo of the long distant sheep-bell, or, at intervals, the barking of dogs in the adjoining village; and twice she dejectedly returned to her vacant seat, for the gathering clouds had long foretold an approaching storm, and

 the

the heavy drops of rain which already beat against her window, by proving it was near, awakened her fears for a husband's safety.

His path lay across a dreary heath, which could afford him no shelter from the violence of the torrent that now began to issue from the portentous clouds, and her heart sickened as the hollow blast vibrated round her lonely dwelling. For a moment she looked with anguish on her sleeping infants, who smiled, unconscious of the warring elements; but when the vivid flashes of lightning, succeeded by loud peals of thunder, which threatened, as she believed, instant destruction, appalled every sense, she clasped her hands in agony, and knelt by them in all the horror of despair.

Still the tempest raged with unabated fury; but Margretta, motionless with terror, continued gazing on her children, till the shrill voice of the trusty Carlo, who had accompanied his master, caught her

her ear—it proclaimed his safety—despair was banished by the certainty; and, in the next moment, clasped to the affectionate heart of Donald, Margretta forgot the storm. She was unconscious also that he was accompanied by a stranger, till, having relieved her fears by an assurance that he had sustained no injury from the tempestuous weather, Donald entreated his guest would be seated, and with honest simplicity apologized for the inattention of his wife, which he attributed solely to the fright she had sustained from knowing he was out in so rough a night.

"And yet I would willingly encounter just such another, my good friend," said the stranger, "to witness such a meeting; though truly we have had a sorry journey, and but for your hospitable invitation, I should even now be enduring the pitiless storm, which appears to have lost little of its violence."

It was even so; for the rude-formed

walls of the humble dwelling feebly resisted the ceaseless rain which battered against them, while the loud murmurs of the hollow blast bespoke the evident convulsions of surrounding nature. But the innocent are fearless, and it was thus with Donald: his frugal repast, prepared by the hand of her he loved, stood ready for his reception; the cheerful fire blazed on a clean swept hearth, and his children slept in safety; it was not, therefore, for a man thus encompassed with earthly comforts that the storm could have a terror.

His guest was warmly entreated to partake their fare; and during the homely meal, Margretta learnt he was on his way, when overtaken by Donald, to visit a lady who resided at no great distance from them, and whom both her husband and self reverenced as a superior being: it was a sister long lost, and deeply regretted, whom, after many a fruitless search, he had at last traced, with much difficulty,

difficulty, under a feigned name, to a dreary solitude in the north of England; but no sooner had the rustic pair discovered that their present inmate was truly the brother of madam Duncannon, than their assiduity was, if possible, redoubled, and the honour his presence conferred rendered them inattentive to every thing but his accommodation; and in vain he proposed attempting that night to reach the cottage she was said to inhabit.

Were they to suffer a relation of madam Duncannon's again to expose himself to such a storm? No—besides, their beloved lady would be in bed long since, and might be alarmed by so late a visitor.

Every objection, therefore, to his incommoding them by a longer stay was overruled; and, with a promise that Donald should accompany him at an early hour on the following day to her abode, the stranger determined to pass

the night beneath their roof, happy that Heaven had favoured his inquiries, by leading him to people so well prepared to satisfy him in much he had yet to learn of this beloved sister.

"You are doubtless," he said, "old residents in this part of the world, and can tell me how long Mrs. Duncannon has been in your neighbourhood?"

"That I never heard," replied Donald; "but she must have been here long before us, for we learnt her praises from young and old when we first came to this cottage, and had soon reason to join in them. Margretta fell sick shortly after we took it, and I had most certainly lost both her and the little angel you see, sir, sleeping there, but for the goodness of madam and her noble son."

"She has a child then? Heaven be praised!" said the stranger, with an energy that startled his auditors.

"Yes, sir," continued the enraptured Donald, "and such a child kings might covet—

covet—But, as I was saying to your honour, she found us out, and never ceased to visit our poor dwelling, till her kind care had restored them both to health, since which she has been our best friend, and is become so fond of my little Jessy, that she almost lives with her; this indeed is partly to please master Seymour, who is never happy but when she is near him."

"They are then, perhaps, nearly of an age?" returned the stranger.

"There is but two years difference," Donald replied; "the son of my benefactress is seven years old, and my little girl nearly five; but your honour would be pleased to see their childish affection for each other, and this you will have an opportunity of doing, if you do not set out too early, as master Seymour will not fail to pay us an early visit, after such a night as this, to satisfy himself that Jessy was not frightened by the thunder."

This simple account of the children had excited more curiosity in the breast of the stranger than Donald was aware of; he was himself the child of Nature, her pure laws alone his guide, and futurity a book he never studied, for the present brought with it content and her attendant peace; he therefore daily witnessed the infant attachment of Seymour and Jessy, without an idea bordering on those which possessed the man to whom the artless tale was told. He, on the contrary, moved a distinguished character in that world of which Donald knew but the name: education had refined his sentiments, but ambition had sapped the foundation of a once-noble mind, while avarice had taught him the narrow distinction between rich and poor. Hence a connection, however remote, which might ally greatness to the sons of industry, was a supposition not to be tolerated; and the evil he now contemplated, though small as a grain of sand from its oozy bed,

bed, might become a cloud of sufficient magnitude to obscure the prospects he already had in view for the offspring of this newly-recovered sister, now he learnt she had a child, and that fortunately, as he termed it, a boy: rapid as were the transitions of his ideas during the recital, they had determined him how to act; and having assured Donald he would wait the event of Seymour's arrival before he sought his mother, next inquired by whom Mrs. Duncannon was visited, and in what manner she chiefly spent her time?

To the first question, Donald answered—" He understood madam chose the lone house on the bourn side because she would see no company, and that he did not think the great people could believe such a lady lived there, for she kept no other servants than a little girl, whom she had taken from a neighbouring hut, and old Gilbert, who always attended master Seymour in his

rambles, while his good mother was paying her visits to the sick poor, in whose service she employed all the time not spent in learning her son; for she was thought to be a main great scholar, seeing she played all kinds of music, and had beautiful pictures that she had painted herself——"

"If she has so few attendants," said her brother, interrupting him, "I am fearful she must have been in great terror during this tempestuous night, and from the situation of her house, in danger also?"

"No, your honour," he replied; "had her dwelling come to harm, I should have had a messenger long ere this, for she is surrounded by little huts, whose inhabitants would all risk their lives to save hers, and some would have run to our cottage, had they wanted assistance; and as for fear, she is much too good to know it, for she tells us in all our troubles, the great God who made us means

not

not that we shall perish, and that believing in him, we have nothing to fear. Storms too, she assures us, are not sent to harm us, and even Margretta now does not mind the most dreadful."

"Not," she returned, "when you are safe at home."

The stranger smiled at her artless proviso, and having congratulated her on his present safety, retired for a few hours to the bed his kind hostess had prepared for him.

CHAPTER II.

ANTICIPATING the arrival of Seymour, he arose at an early hour, and so fully was his mind engrossed by the various opinions he had formed as to the child he was taught to expect, from Donald's

description, that not a thought occurred of the little Jessy, who was the subject of his expected visit; but when, on entering the apartment in which the family were assembled to partake the morning's repast, her cherub form met his sight, astonishment became a term too poor for the sensation he experienced. A rosy-faced boy, whose smiling countenance told his happy temper, was employed in parting, with his little sunburnt fingers, the luxuriant curls, that more than half concealed eyes, blue as the azure heavens; and having kissed her with fraternal affection, he said—" Now, Jessy, make room for Edward to sit down by you."

But the stranger's appearance at that moment disconcerted them; Edward looked abashed, and Jessy, clinging to the side of Margretta, eyed him with childish confusion.

Donald had spoken in raptures of Seymour Duncannon, but Jessy's incomparable

able beauty he had not even named. Could a rustic possessing such a child fail to know its worth, or to admire it as a prodigy? surely not.

In a moment the danger of such a companion, though in infancy, for Seymour, darted on his mind, and made him unjust to the honest worth of his host, whose modest diffidence was now construed to art, and his silence thought to be premeditated, that the effect might be greater when he saw her; but as he gazed in silent wonder, Donald entered from his early labours, and having respectfully inquired how he had rested, proudly took the still but half-reconciled girl from Margretta's apron, and advancing towards him, said—"This, sir, is the child whom our neighbours call the 'Rose of Donald's Cottage,' because madam Duncannon named her such one morning, when the cold air had given her cheeks a fine colour; but indeed," he added, "she is seldom without it."

Ashamed

Ashamed that he had for a moment accused the chaste simplicity of the man who thus addressed him, and struck by the power of infantine beauty, he took her on his knee, acknowledging his imagination could never have pictured such perfection in the human form.

Donald's expectation was soon verified; for, before the conclusion of their meal, the uplifted latch proclaimed the arrival of a visitor, and in the next instant a face, in which health vied with the expression of every feature, was thrust into the contracted space, while, in a manly animated voice, its possessor exclaimed—"Well, good folks, here I am!"

But at that moment his eye rested on a stranger's face, and though a stranger was of all things least expected in Donald's cottage, his embarrassment was momentary; for having thrown open the door, which he had till then held, he advanced with a noble undaunted air into the

the room, and after bowing gracefully to the unknown guest, turning to Donald, he said—" I am happy to find you all well this morning, after so boisterous a night. I was fearful Jessy would be sadly frightened, which has brought me so early; but she looks none the worse."

While speaking, his eyes wandered from his little friend, who was reluctantly kept on her seat by the gentleman who held her, and their pointed expression marked the curiosity his presence there, as well as her situation on his knee, excited.

Donald and Margretta having made their grateful acknowledgments for his kindness, eagerly inquired after Mrs. Duncannon, and received with pleasure the assurance of her health and safety. " But poor Gilbert," he added, " is, I believe, something the worse for the storm, for I have left him wading through the mud, and wondering I could get on so fast, without remembering the difference

ence of his legs and mine; but I begged him not to hurry, as I should meet him on my return, not having a moment to stay, as my mother spends the morning at home."

The restraint imposed on Jessy now becoming painful, she made an effort for a release, and having obtained it, glided silently round to the chair near which Seymour stood. He observed the motion with apparent pleasure, and taking her hand, said—" I shall not see you again to day, for I must study hard, because to-morrow I shall have to attend your lessons, as you will spend the day with my mother, and I shall come with Gilbert to fetch you early. Edward, my good fellow," placing his hand on her brother's head, " good-bye to you."

And then bidding each a separate adieu, he was hastening to the door, when Donald, begging his pardon for stopping him, said—" He was preparing to set out also for madam Duncannon's with

with the gentleman he saw, who had business with her."

This intelligence rivetted him, for never had a being passed their threshold in his remembrance, save the rustic clan by whom they were surrounded, and among whom he had spent the few past years of his existence.

Willing to mitigate his evident surprise, by in part revealing who he was, the brother of Mrs. Duncannon inquired if his mother had ever named any of her relations to him?

"Never, sir," was the answer; "nor do I think she believes herself in possession of one, since she has lived some years on the bourn side, in a solitude, which I have often heard her declare she would never willingly resign."

"Perhaps," returned the stranger, "you can influence her to believe she has yet a brother, tenderly interested for her welfare, when I assure you he has, since his return to England, sought her

her with unremitting assiduity, but that it is only within these few week she has fortunately discovered her retirement."

"And you know that brother, sir?" returned Seymour, as if musing intently on what he heard, but started on being told he then stood before him; and though it was the first relation he had ever seen, besides the parent he revered, a consciousness of the duty he owed to the brother of that parent instinctively led him to take the extended hand of his uncle, which he pressed respectfully, entreating he might be allowed to precede Donald and himself, with information that would doubtless afford his mother much pleasure, and which the great surprise might otherwise damp.

To this no objection could be started, and the delighted boy set out; but if his speed, quickened by the wish of seeing Jessy, had in his journey thither outstripped his aged companion, it was far exceeded on his return by the important

news

news of which he was the willing herald.

Breathless with impatience, he entered the apartment in which Mrs. Duncannon awaited his arrival, who, while she reproved him for using such undue exercise, secretly admired the beautiful glow of health which that exercise had increased on his youthful cheek. Elated with the story he was going to impart, Seymour prefaced the sequel by an account of the strange gentleman he had met in Donald's cottage; but when he added, the purport of his business there was to seek her, a more than usual paleness passed over her interesting features, and in faltering accents she demanded his name?

That Seymour had never learnt; but when he mentioned his consanguinity, with clasped hands she exclaimed, "Then the little peace solitude could only insure me is broken in upon, and I have no longer aught to expect but ceaseless anxiety!

Where,

Where, my poor boy, is this relation, who comes to deprive us of the only wealth his unkindness spared me—a retirement unmolested?"

How different was this reception to that his ardent mind had pictured!

Seymour listened attentively while she spoke, but incapable of assimilating her words to his own ideas, he looked silently towards the window for his approach; while Mrs. Duncannon, absorbed in a deep reverie, noticed not his arrival, till the voice of Donald inquiring for her recalled the powers of recollection. Hers were evidently of a painful nature, and instead of returning the offered embrace, she coolly resumed the seat she had left on his entrance, after desiring Seymour to set a vacant one for the gentleman.

"And why not, my Helen, for his uncle?" said her brother.

"Because I have yet, sir," she replied, with studied indifference, "to learn how far

far you merit the title you seem so impatient to claim. Seymour, my love," she continued, "I have business with this gentleman; see that the good Donald has some refreshment, and when I wish for your presence, I will call on you."

Seymour retired, his little heart swelling with the various emotions this singular transaction had given rise to, and for two hours anxiously awaited the signal which was to recall him to his mother's room. But what was his surprise when, Donald being first summoned, he in the next instant saw him depart with that uncle, from whose arrival he had formed expectations which he was nevertheless at a loss to define!

On his re-entering the apartment which he had so reluctantly quitted, Mrs. Duncannon appeared more composed, though he could easily perceive proofs of recent agitation, and that she had shed tears, since the traces of them were still discernible.

"You

"You are doubtless, my beloved boy, surprised at the sudden departure of this new-found relation," she said with kindness, as he entered the room, "and I regret that I cannot fully explain the motives which make me rejoice in that departure; but of this be assured, however strange my conduct may appear to you, I am biassed by no motive save that of your future welfare; my own happiness is not held in competition with yours, and I exist but to promote it. Should I ultimately fail in doing so, it will be an error of judgment only, since it is the criterion of my every action."

This Seymour hesitated not to believe; but there was a mystery in the whole that he could not develop, and that mystery imposed a tax on his active imagination, that for a few hours became painful; but his was the happy age when mutability is a blessing—when so rapid are the successions of pain and pleasure, that even the tear of infant sorrow is not unfrequently

unfrequently seen to glisten on the very cheek dimpled by playful smiles.

CHAPTER III.

His mother gradually resumed her wonted composure, but forbore leading to the subject of their late visitor, and Jessy was permitted to spend the following day with them; but Gilbert was dispatched alone for her, and though this marred a project of Seymour's, which was to inquire what became of the stranger when he left their house, in her presence he forgot the disappointment; and notwithstanding her father was for some time in close conference with Mrs. Duncannon, in consequence of

of her sending for him, he sought no opportunity of seeing him alone; and succeeding months passed on without any further interruption to the sequestered life they led.

Seymour's improvement exceeded even a mother's wishes; nor did she appear to derive less pleasure from the opening beauties of Jessy's mind, which, cultivated under her care, promised to equal that of her exterior form. Their early attachment had never given her a moment's concern, for she either considered it as too trivial for notice, or was indifferent as to the result. The very few great neighbours she possessed would perhaps have termed her mode of conduct towards the children absurd, if not imprudent; but her actions came not within the scale of their observations, and her rustic friends were much too ignorant to form an opinion, and too devoted to her service to believe she could err. But her beloved seclusion was again

to

to be interrupted, though from another quarter, and that when least expected.

A castle near to her dwelling, once the seat of northern hospitality, but long since the terror of weak superstition, probably from the very circumstance of its being uninhabited, reared its ivy-decked turrets, and proudly bade defiance to every hostile attack, while the warlike chief who last owned the venerable pile possessed only the narrow circumference of a vaulted mausoleum, bordering his demesne, and where he slept in peace with his forefathers.

It bounded a favourite walk of Mrs. Duncannon's, and often, while the children ranged the grounds, she seated herself near the building, contemplating in it the epitome of fallen greatness, though it not unfrequently led her to a painful retrospect of the past, by a comparative view of the changes in her own life; for she had moved in a far different scene from that in which fate had now placed

 her,

her, nor had her dawning sun beheld even a vestige of the clouds which had obscured its meridian, and still hung portentous over its declining rays. But the rectitude of a virtuous mind gave firmness to her conduct—trifling evils could not intimidate her, and if she did not rise superior to those of a greater magnitude, she evinced in every added trial a greatness of soul that enabled her to stem the torrent of opposing sorrow. Choice, not disgust, had driven her from the world; for, considering it but as a preparatory step to a better, she had never beheld its defects with a jaundiced eye; and though few had more keenly felt its vicissitudes than herself, she blended with her instruction to the young Seymour such pleasing descriptions of it, that it might have been supposed her voluntary exile had rather enhanced its value than weakened its powers of attraction; while with the purest judgment she corrected his opinion of those who,

he

he was given to understand, existed in it, by drawing so accurate a description between the vicious and the good, that while he shrunk from the approach of vice, by proving the detestation in which he held it, his little heart exulted in the performance of every action that he was taught to believe would insure him the respect and approbation of good and noble minds: hence his love of virtue, and the dignity of soul that raised him above the child.

Their accustomed perambulation had one evening brought them so near the castle, that Mrs. Duncannon beheld with surprise, windows, which during her residence in the neighbourhood the sun had never penetrated, opened to receive the fragrant breaths of heaven, while the circling smoke, issuing from its gothic chimney, arose in spiral form above the lofty battlements. Several domestics crossed the long-deserted avenue, which she had so frequently paced unmolested;

but their presence proved hers was no longer proper, and she hastily turned her direction.

That the castle was going to be inhabited, observation left no room to doubt; but her curiosity was no farther excited by the circumstance, than to cause a momentary regret that she should in future be debarred the privilege of wandering in its sequestered walks.

Seymour would have asked a thousand questions, but his curiosity, when it tended not to useful knowledge, was a propensity his mother never indulged; of this he was aware; therefore having wondered what laird was coming to reside so near them, he tripped after Jessy, with a heart much lighter than the new possessor of the castle boasted.

But an incident so unexpected could not long remain a secret, and Gilbert was prepared for his mistress's return, with a history that lost little in its relation by the garrulity of old age. "The

lord

lord Malcolm," he said, "had purchased the estate, and was coming with a considerable clan to reside in it; but it was very strange!"

"Surely, my good friend," replied Mrs. Duncannon, smiling at the significant shrugs, that were meant to express something remained yet untold, "there is at least nothing very wonderful in this part of your story."

"What! not, madam, in so great a lord taking the castle, when it has been deserted so many years?"

"Decidedly not; only a great lord, as you term him, could have occasion for such extensive premises, which has probably been the cause of its remaining so long uninhabited, as the late possessor is said to have left no descendants, and his heir-at-law, if there is any, has never claimed it; at least so I have been given to understand."

"But *then*, madam, the present lord is so impatient to get to the castle, that

he will not wait for the common repairs being done; and they say it is a sorry place inside for such a great man; indeed his servants think, when he sees every thing around him so gloomy, it will make him worse than he is now."

"Is he then in ill health?" asked Mrs. Duncannon.

"Much worse, my lady," and again Gilbert's shoulders made a rapid inclination towards his ears; "he is beside himself; that is, at times, for at others he is quite well, and is a very good master; but I fancy, had he been as good a father, he might have been more happy."

Gilbert was now advancing to the marvellous part of his narrative, which he would have enlarged by the embellishments of his own opinion, but his mistress no sooner found the relation extended to the domestic affairs of her new neighbour, than she checked his volubility by remarking, that as lord Malcolm's private character could be of no conse-

quence

quence to them, they would wave the subject.

He would fain have proceeded, for he had yet much to communicate, but Mrs. Duncannon's commands, though always delivered in the mildest accents, were, he well knew, indisputable. Gilbert was therefore silent, though he made ample amends for the constraint he had been obliged to put on his own love of talking, by rehearsing the foregoing particulars, with all he knew, to the little girl who was a domestic in the house with him; but this, though it appeared so important to the good old man, amounted to no more than that it was rumoured lord Malcolm had disinherited an only son, once his greatest pride, and had never been seen to smile since.

Several days succeeded the little incident, during which Seymour as usual paid his daily visits to the cottage of Donald, and Jessy, in return, spent her happiest hours at the bourn side, when

the appearance of a splendid equipage announced the arrival of their new neighbour.

A sight so new could not fail to astonish the children. Mrs. Duncannon, as she beheld it pass at a small distance from her humble mansion, heaved a sigh, without a consciousness of having done so; while Gilbert rubbed his hands, pleased with the determination he had secretly made in his own mind, of getting acquainted, if possible, with some of the many servants who were going to reside at the castle.

But a different scene took place at the obscure residence of Jessy: Donald, as usual, returned from his rustic employment, though the hour of his doing so somewhat exceeded that in which Margretta was accustomed to expect him; but it served as a pretext for his pleading more than common fatigue, and retiring almost instantly to bed; yet his sleep, when there, was not, as usual, the

sweet

sweet restorative to weary nature; its potent power pervaded his frame, but reached not the more active mind, which evidently laboured under some concealed oppression, though whence the heavy sighs that at times reached the anxious ear of Margretta, she could not divine.

Of sorrow they had hitherto known but little, since their poverty had placed them beyond those imaginary wants that so often create disappointment, and their attendant train of evils; and the coarse bread that cherished them, though earned by the sweat of his brow, while sweetened with content, left them careless of a change of fortune, but grateful for that they enjoyed. She was convinced no bad deed could have rendered him thus restless, for she knew his honest heart would have shrunk from the performance of an unjust action: she had followed him to the seat of war, for Donald had been a soldier—seen him prepare with dauntless intrepidity to meet his country's foes,

and sleep, on the eve of doing so, peaceful as the passive infant, who dreamt not of making war, or its countless dangers.

Unable, therefore, to assign a more satisfactory reason for his apparent uneasiness, she endeavoured to persuade herself it might be the effect of a dream; and having tranquillized her own mind by the probable suggestion, she yielded to the ascendant power of sleep, which, by closing her eyelids, left her totally unconscious of the hours Donald counted with impatience, till the soaring lark, high over his straw-built roof, called him to his daily task.

Never had morning's tuneful herald been more welcome; and having arisen with alacrity, kissed the still-sleeping cheeks of Jessy and Edward, he hastened forth to early labour.

But scarcely had Mrs. Duncannon seated herself at the breakfast-table than Donald was announced; he had always been

been a favourite, and her favourites were ever greeted with the smile of sincerity; but a moment served to convince her it was to more than a common incident she owed the unusual visit of her rustic neighbour; and having desired him to be seated, inquired what had brought him thus early to the bourn side?

"To ask your advice, madam," he replied, "without which I know not how to act."

Struck by his eager manner, she entreated him to say in what she could serve him; but the entrance of Seymour left him only time to solicit a private conference, as his business with her related to lord Malcolm, the new possessor of the castle.

More than ever surprised at his increasing agitation, as with the purport of his visit, she retired with him, giving orders that she might receive no interruption during the time Donald was with her.

Whatever the result of this private interview, it was carefully concealed on either side; for Donald returned with a heart so much lighter, that when Margretta related her apprehensions of the preceding night, he assured her, with a smile, they were groundless, as he was, at that moment, happy as usual; and Mrs. Duncannon carefully evaded leading to the subject of his visit to her.

But if lord Malcolm's arrival was so soon known among them, he, in turn, was not long in making himself equally acquainted with the various characters of the humble neighbours by whom he was surrounded—intelligence he chiefly owed to the volubility of his favourite valet, who, in a few days, contrived to make himself perfect master of the little history in which they were all comprised, and in which Mrs. Duncannon bore no inconsiderable part. The inhabitants were in general peasants—the hardy sons of labour, whose sturdy frames, inured to toil, proclaimed them

them the rude children of nature, and in whose lives there was little variation, since their only study was, by industry, to procure the common means of subsistence—their only ambition to prove the fealty with which they served the lord of whose clan they proudly owned themselves subjects: but her household came not within this number; yet, sequestered as was the life she led, though unknown, and almost unattended, she was, he found, nevertheless a ruling star; every cottager breathed her name with ecstacy, and in reciting her praises, heeded not the inquiry they were so little prepared to answer, of who she was, or whence she came. The mystery, therefore, that enveloped her, excited a degree of interest in the mind of lord Malcolm, which promised, for a while, to divert it from the baneful cause which had cankered peace, and left him the hopeless victim of devoted misery.

He conjectured she must be the child

of

of sorrow, or whence this seclusion from the world? for who that felt the mild influence of happiness, and revelled in the full sunshine of felicity, would seek a residence so mean, in the chill solitude of a northern sky? It could only be a soul nipt by the cutting breath of ingratitude—stung by the venom of some unkindly sorrow, that could listen to the loud blast, and feel soothed by its severity.

With such a motive he had sought it, and determined, though surrounded by the appendages so requisite to his rank in life, retired within himself, to indulge the gloomy habit which had for some years grown on him.

Unchecked in his narrative, Leopold omitted speaking of her son, for that would have been touching a chord with which his lord's sorrow was too nearly connected; he therefore left the discovery of Seymour, and his affinity to Mrs. Duncannon, to the effect of chance; but

but her *protégée* was not forgotten, and the 'Rose of Donald's Cottage' lost little of her rustic fame in the recital of lord Malcolm's informer; but the account of a child, even beautiful as he proclaimed her, weighed lightly in the scale of that interest her patroness had excited; and having dismissed his servant, he ruminated on the most probable means of obtaining an interview with the Recluse of the Bourn. But with a heart proud in its own prerogatives, implacable in its resentments, and soured by disappointment, he still reverenced female delicacy; it was therefore no easy task—since, to break in on her retirement, without having a motive to assign for so doing, was not at all compatible with the respect he already, though unknown, felt for her; and, as his household consisted but of domestics, he had no chance of inducing her to visit the castle—when an incident, least expected, presented the

wished-for

wished-for opportunity, and that within a short period of his arrival in the neighbourhood.

CHAPTER IV.

His only daughter had married a man in all respects her inferior as to birth and fortune; but as, at the time of her marriage, lord Malcolm's every wish was centered in the son who was to give to posterity the name and dignities he so proudly vaunted, the indiscretion of his daughter was scarcely heeded; and having given her a portion more than adequate to the choice she had made, he turned every thought to the future aggrandizement of that son, for whom alone

alone he lived; and the early propensities of his generous nature justified the love he bore him, had it made him less indifferent to the child who by nature had equal claims on his affection, since the lovely woman who gave them birth, in the awful hour of closing existence, bequeathed them equally to his paternal care, though she had often witnessed, with painful solicitude, the evident preference Alphonso maintained over their infant Madeline. But in losing her mother, Madeline lost her only friend, since lord Malcolm's fondness faded with his remembrance of the being who adjured it; and though Alphonso loved her with a brother's affection, the superiority of his years gave him pursuits in which she would have been an intruder. She was, therefore, at the command of her father, mostly confined to that part of the house appropriated to herself and attendants, and where he occasionally paid her the short visits which were made as

a point

a point of duty, rather than from motives of paternal love.

To the mistaken indulgence, therefore, of her governess, and such of the domestics who were privileged to become her occasional associates, Madeline owed the dangerous sentiment that first inspired her with an idea of seeking happiness in her own way: she believed it depended wholly on finding a mind congenial with her own, which was, from neglect, too much uncultivated to leave her a safe arbitress of her own fate. She had talents which her partial mother would have nurtured till perfection had given them lustre, and obliged even lord Malcolm to view them with admiration; but they lost the fostering hand that should have rear d them while yet in embryo, and the blossom, thus nipt, gradually withered, leaving only a heart disposed to every virtue, but weak in its resolutions, and easily subdued.

A prize thus free of access was not long

long unsought; nor had the fortunate candidate for her favour reason to complain of a mistress's tyranny; for Madeline required only a friend to whom she could confide every sentiment, and hers were pure as artless; she believed such a companion and mutual affection were the only requisites to make life desirable; and thought her happiness secured, when, in the brother of the only female friend allowed to visit her, who was the daughter of a deceased clergyman, and related to her governess, she found the impassioned lover who lived but in her smiles.

Little persuasion was requisite towards removing her from her paternal roof, since a father's love had never endeared her residence in it; and Alphonso, whom alone she would have consulted, was on his travels.

Lord Malcolm, unable to reconcile himself to a separation, had accompanied him part of the way, and was still absent;

sent; no obstacle, therefore, remained to impede her wishes; and he had the mortification of learning, on his return, that Madeline, regardless of his anger, and the consequence, had left her nursery for a husband's arms. His hasty lips had half pronounced a curse on his neglected child, for daring to seek from another that protection he had himself denied her; but a remembrance of her mother's injunctions, and a conviction of his own neglect, checked the sentence; and having heaped them on the man who had thus basely stolen her from him, he endeavoured to forget the stab his pride had sustained, by enabling her to make an appearance that might neither disgrace himself nor the beloved boy who was now to inherit all he possessed, and whom two years from that event brought to Scotland, as fair a flower as it could boast.

Madeline's indiscretion, nay, even herself, were no longer suffered to steal on his recollection, for his mind, engrossed

by

by one only object, turned but to the happiness of which he so eagerly sought to lay the foundation; but it is a seed seldom sown by the hand of an ambitious father, and as seldom raised to perfection in that soil which avaricious greatness has marked its own.

Alphonso, the idol of a father's love, and possessed of sentiments that did honour to his nature as a man, could not but venerate the parent thus kindly interested in his welfare, and believed that his own life was of far less estimation to himself than would be that of lord Malcolm. Years of misery had been spared to each, if the latter's death at that period had put his affection to the test; but Alphonso was to prove that filial ties are not the strongest which bind us to earth, and that, though they form one of nature's most endearing links in the great chain of human existence, it is easily severed by the more potent magic of all-subduing love; and too late he found

found his own ideas of happiness were incompatible with his father's views—too late discovered that a hitherto-indulgent father could become an implacable judge. The Scottish court hailed him as one of its brightest ornaments, and if nobility had charms, there were few among its fairest daughters that would have refused an alliance with Malcolm's heir, who in personal beauty had few competitors—in chivalry stood unrivalled; but in vain lord Malcolm directed his choice—in vain pointed out those virgins whom rank and fortune destined as brides worthy of his selection: Alphonso could admire, but he had no longer a heart to bestow; and, relying on the fatal indulgence which had left him exposed even to the seduction of vice, had his soul been less noble, he dared to own that virtue, in its purest garb of native simplicity, unadorned save by matchless beauty and innate worth, had lured him from ambition's tasteless shrine to worship the

indigent

indigent daughter of a man, whose dearest days had been spent in the tented field, and who, falling covered with scars on the bed of honour, had left his orphan child a soldier's portion—the nice sense of a father's honour, and the bitter remembrance of his unrequited services.

Staggered by the temerity with which he dared to avow the probable destruction of all his hopes, and agonized by a prospect of their failure—for well he knew the intrepid firmness of Alphonso's mind, lord Malcolm gazed on him in breathless agitation; but the impending storm was too great for suppression, and burst with fatal violence on its devoted victim—every denunciation of wrath was threatened, if he consented not to surrender the cursed siren by whom he was seduced to a father's vengeance—every bitter invective poured on her hapless head, that rage and disappointed ambition could invent. But the storm Alphonso's sincerity had raised proved his shield

shield against its violence, by rendering him still more determined to defend the lovely girl of whom he was now become the sole protector, and he quitted his father's presence with a composure that left the latter still more at a loss how to act, for as yet he knew not the extent of the evil he anticipated with phrenzied terror, and dared to trust kindness and entreaty might effect what his ungovernable passion had failed to do.

Again, therefore, Alphonso was summoned, but it was only to deprive his incensed parent of that reason which his first paroxysm of rage had already staggered; resting on the proofs of affection so often received from this idolized son, his first aim was to attack those feelings which, he yet hoped, leaned to a parent's side, and began by representing not only the failure of all his promised expectations, but the final wreck of a father's happiness, if he persisted in the ill-fated attachment which had caused his

deviation

deviation from that duty he had, through life, so punctually fulfilled.—"Can my son," he said, taking his hand with kindness, "resolve to behold the parent who for his sake sacrificed every tie of nature but that which bound him to thee, crushed by thy ingratitude, humbled to the dust, his fondest hopes blasted, and the measure of his years filled up by sorrow of thy inflicting? Many cannot now remain to me; and that life had been closed with transport, which I resigned to give added wealth and honour to my soul's idol, while his affection soothed each pang of expiring nature. Say then, am I to seek a premature grave from thy conduct? shall Alphonso, forgetting the filial duties that bound him to me, become at once the parricide? It cannot be—he cannot sacrifice the friend who has cherished him from infancy for one too little known to merit the title. Believe me, Alphonso, the rash affection thou wouldst call love is not that

 passion:

passion: lured by the fascinating charm of beauty, so fatal to the romantic ardour of youth, thou hast mistaken the term—for love is pure as the thoughts of dying saints when angels hover over them—harmless as pilgrims' kisses on the shrine of holy martyrs; it is the zephyr, and not the whirlwind of the soul—reason, affection—all, all will conspire to plead a father's claims, and thou wilt yet bid him live to see thee what his proudest ambition would make thee—a long-remembered ornament to thy country—to hear thee bless him for rescuing thee from an ignoble connexion, that would have hurled thee to an obscurity never designed a fate like thine."

Overpowered by the sensations which agitated him, lord Malcolm stopped and looked anxiously for the reply he nevertheless dreaded; but he had gone too far, and in stigmatizing Adela, the innocent unoffending Adela, he rendered Alphonso unmindful of all those claims he had so forcibly

forcibly enumerated, and still more tenacious of those she had on him, which were such as no father could sever, no law disannul—she was his, by every sacred vow confirmed on earth, and registered in heaven. Still he keenly felt the severity of lord Malcolm's disappointment, for the second object of his affection had not lessened the love he bore him; and had he expressed it in terms less severe, less injurious to the wife of his bosom, would have regretted that nature had not formed his heart and wishes consonant to those of his parent, by giving him a thirst for that ambition, his total contempt of which would now too probably for ever alienate them from each other, and involve himself and Adela in insurmountable difficulties. But the die was cast, and the fair fame of her he had vowed to protect was not to be sullied by even an air of mystery which a public avowal of his marriage could alone remove. Therefore, having

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assured lord Malcolm, that though he had dared in one point to follow the dictates of his own judgment, which had unhappily clashed with his wishes, he would in every other instance find that no situation in life should render him unmindful of his duty, or unworthy the affection of a father, whose every command had hitherto been his dearest law. "But if," he added, "I have presumed to make a choice unapproved by your lordship, even you, I proudly assert, will own, on a knowledge of her worth, that I have selected a gem which will add honour, and not receive it, from a title I never wished to give her, till life, dispossessed of every charm, shall, in the full of years, leave you no desire but a joyful immortality."

"Never, never, detested hypocrite, insinuating viper, shall these eyes behold the siren who has planted daggers in my aged bosom; and could I purchase life, mine should be extended till, satiated with a

continual

continual view of the misery my daily curses heaped on you both, I resigned it to leave you a title you could no longer enjoy—when accumulated evils, the stings of hunger, and the curse of poverty, had left you no wish but that of a shelter in the grave which held an injured father."

Appalled by the reiterated maledictions, issuing from lips accustomed only to bless him, Alphonso stood transfixed with horror; but lord Malcolm desisted not till his son, roused to agony, entreated to be heard; but the enraged savage, or ferocious tiger, had sooner listened to Heaven's divine attribute, mercy, than the being he vainly supplicated. A confirmation of this fatal marriage was not to be borne—Ambition foiled, his hitherto undisputed power set at nought, were evils not to be tolerated: reason fled the contest, and in forsaking him left room for an insidious guest—it was the only one to be endured, because the

only one formed to soothe the present tumult of his soul; to her baneful influence, therefore, he committed every remaining faculty of his mind, and from the dictates of revenge, vowed to receive every satisfaction his injured spirit demanded. Alphonso was already loathsome to his sight, and in the bitterness of his rage he struck him—an indignity only to be forgotten in her presence whose voice soothed every care to rest.

Casting, therefore, on lord Malcolm a look more expressive of pity than anger, he sought Adela, the ministering angel of peace. But the soft smile that bade him welcome, the fond embrace and endearing inquiry of what had detained him, added poignancy to the unmerited insult he had received; and, as he clasped her in silence to his bursting heart, the tear of anguish, forced from his burning eyelids, fell on her beauteous cheek, and mingled with the pearly drop that had stolen from its confines on behold-

ing

ing his increasing agitation. Alarmed by the wildness with which he surveyed her, she entreated he would allow her to call assistance if he found himself unwell; but the fortitude he had meant to assume had totally forsaken him, and the conviction that he was now a beggar, aided by a cruel remembrance of the disgraceful blow, unmanned him quite. Grasping her hand with added violence, he exclaimed, with an hysteric laugh—"Tyrant, I defy thy curses! she is innocent, and thy malice cannot harm her, thy vengeance reach her, but through this heart, which thou must lacerate to find the recess which holds her! No, Adela," he continued, "you must not leave me, for they would separate us—my father would tear thee from me."

The truth was now obvious: Alphonso had owned his marriage, and lord Malcolm had refused to sanction it. This she had always dreaded, and was therefore less surprised at the result; but

Adela was not the love-sick girl, who, to secure a husband, would herself disregard every obstacle, remove every impediment to her wishes, by setting at defiance the whole train of filial duties if they clashed with her own romantic views of happiness; hers was indeed the pure and hallowed love lord Malcolm had so well defined—but it was a love that sought not to lure Alphonso from his duty, since she never failed to raise new difficulties whenever he had surmounted those she was continually representing.

He owned ambition was the shrine his father had raised, and expected him to worship—"But then, my Adela," he continued, "it is raised on the foundation of affection, and will the more easily give way when my wishes are known to lord Malcolm. I know also his high veneration for ancient pedigree, and how much he values the prerogative of high birth, but Adela's virtues will more than compensate for her want of either. Once more,

more, by every human tie, he will readily pardon my want of confidence in him, and proudly adopt the lovely daughter I shall present him."

Adela was not so sanguine; report spoke not thus favourably of lord Malcolm's condescension; he was known to be haughty and overbearing to those he considered his inferiors—artful, designing, and insinuating to his equals—but even servile to those whom superior rank left him any thing to expect from their favour or notice. She knew his unbounded affection for Alphonso in some measure warranted the latter's hopes of forgiveness, because it was supposed his very existence depended on the happiness of his son; but still she dreaded her want of title, more than fortune, would be an irreparable barrier to his favour; and to rob Alphonso of such a father's affection, to involve him in difficulties of which she would be the fatal origin, was an idea too painful for reflection.

and determined her to risk the tortures of an eternal separation, in preference to a union unsanctioned by him who had alone the right of bestowing the only man to whom she aspired.

But Alphonso was not the cool platonic lover, whom reason could suffice; the beauteous form of Adela—her exalted mind, far exceeding even her exterior charms, and her unprotected state, were incitements calculated to inspire a mind, ardent, enthusiastic as his own, with more than common perseverance in the cause he had undertaken, which was to draw from that cheerless solitude, in which the death of her father had placed her, a being who would adorn society, and prove to the world, "How many a flower is born to bloom unseen;" for such at that period was Adela's fate. The bitter bread of dependence, derived from an unfeeling relation, was her only resource, and as yet had not armed her timid nature with that fortitude requi-

site

site to the half-formed resolution she had made of embarking in the world, on a speculative exercise of those accomplishments which, in happier days, had been her choicest amusement, and might now fit her for the tuition of those more gifted with fortune, but less endowed with the valuable qualifications that alone add lustre to wealth and beauty. It was not her eyes, beaming intelligence, which first attracted Alphonso, but the intellectual beauties of that mind of which they were the reflecting mirror—nor her lips, on which a thousand smiling graces played, but the sentiments uttered by lips so formed to enslave, that first excited his admiration; he saw her and loved—heard the simple story of her wayward destiny, and vowed at once to become her future protector, believing Heaven had favoured his pursuit of happiness in presenting him so fair a structure of its divine works.

There were times when a momentary

dread of lord Malcolm's withholding his sanction to the step he was about to take crossed his mind, but it could not stagger his plighted faith; for though the one was essential to his peace, the other was requisite to his existence, which, unpossessed of Adela, was no longer desirable. In vain, therefore, her entreaties, that he would resign all thoughts of an alliance with her poverty, unless his wishes were first authorized by his father; and she declared her willingness to abide by his decision, when those wishes were made known to him, even though the result should militate against her own peace.

Alphonso was deaf to entreaties, which he knew must for ever close the only prospect he had of a union with her, and rested not till, at the hallowed shrine of hymeneal rites, he sealed the solemn oath which gave him Adela, and the sole power of defending her orphan state. This secured, he had little leisure

to

to attend the frequent warnings of tenacious memory—that violated duty demanded those atonements which, in the fullness of his happiness, he had hitherto neglected; but the evil, which at a distance appeared of so little magnitude, when brought nearer, assumed a gigantic form, and as it made him daily more apprehensive of lord Malcolm's censure, rendered him also less inclined to seek an opportunity of making an avowal, the result of which must add so much to his future happiness or misery, though the latter was a term he believed incompatible to a life spent with Adela.

As yet lord Malcolm had but indirectly named those wishes, which were nevertheless the ruling passion of his mind, because he trusted Alphonso would, perhaps, when least expected, own the power some distinguished beauty had acquired over him; for he trusted the key to his son's confidence

was,

was, by habitual affection, safe in his own keeping; but a prospect, exceeding even his sanguine expectation, having presented itself, farther delay became dangerous, and as Alphonso still remained silent on a subject in which he was so interested, he determined to be more explanatory as to those views he had in contemplation for his future settlement, by his expressing his own anxiety to bless the beloved progeny, who were, like youthful blossoms, to adorn his winter of age.

Animated by the warmth with which his father expatiated on the theme he had chosen, and considering Adela as the being destined to give those desired blessings, he forgot for the moment that "fortune had not smiled propitious on her birth," or graced it with the empty title which alone gave merit to the possessor in lord Malcolm's eyes: the only sun which gilded her dawning hour of life was that of paternal love—

her

her only riches the spotless fame of those who gave her existence, and to whom she was indebted for the elegant accomplishments that added perfection to her mental charms, and fitted her to move with native ease in the most polished sphere. Alphonso had long anticipated with rapture the period which would enable him to place her in such, and believed the propitious moment was at length arrived so favourable to his wishes; without daring, therefore, to reflect on the probable consequences of the disclosure he had to make, or the effect it might have, he avowed with what transport he should hear his father's benediction bestowed on offspring of his own, should Heaven bless him with such ecstatic ties.

"Why, then, my Alphonso, waste the flower of life without seeking a congenial soul to favour my ardent wishes? —why, with a heart formed for every social virtue, dost thou still keep it thus invulnerable to love?"

Alphonso

Alphonso owned it was not.

Lord Malcolm smiled his approbation of the avowal, and urged him to a farther confirmation of his half-formed hopes, but they were crushed by the very explanation he solicited; for a father's valour, or a daughter's virtues, since both were pennyless, he deemed little compensation for the high-born qualities he listened with avidity to hear graced the exalted fair one whom Alphonso was about to give him for a daughter—and stung by the severity of a disappointment so little expected, it was not till his offending son again stood before him, that he had resolution to demand the name of the base sorceress who had thus plotted his destruction?

Alphonso proudly named Adela; but if her name only, like an electric shock, thrilled his whole frame, the assertion which followed it, that she alone had ever inspired him with love, unstrung every nerve: gasping for respiration, he asked

asked—"Were it possible he had heard right, since earth's remotest bounds could not have produced a being more obnoxious to his senses than Adela Montrose?" She was the daughter of a man every way his superior but in titles and estates, and whose noble endowments of mind and person had been the first cause of severing a friendship that, as schoolboys, had promised to strengthen with their years, notwithstanding few characters could be more opposite.

Malcolm, accustomed to expect a title, between which and himself no obstacle existed, and nursed in the lap of luxury and independence, could select his companions at pleasure, and reject them whenever caprice taught him to expect in a new one what he had found deficient in the one discarded; the littleness of soul which, even in that early age, marked so many of his actions, first led him to select and court the society of Lionel Montrose, because he was deemed

deemed the flower of their academy, and his favour sought by every boy conscious of his worth. Noble, candid, and unassuming in his manners, he not only gained universal admiration, but unbounded esteem; and though he owed the first overtures of Malcolm's friendship to vanity alone, his own virtues cemented the bond of their early union; since, while conscious of the many imperfections that tinged the character of his noble friend, he beheld them with a friend's partiality, believing they were blemishes that might, with care, be eradicated before they had reached the term of errors, and trusting to the talents which he knew him to possess, as a hostage for his future worth, gave him, without restriction, that unlimited confidence he so anxiously solicited.

Lionel Montrose was destined to a military life, and that in its severest school, since it was his only dependence. He therefore carefully improved his

mind

mind in the tactics important to the profession he was to follow; and, as far as possible, inured his body to the fatigues it was fated to encounter, by embracing with avidity every exercise in which athletic strength or agility were required. He was brave, dauntless, and intrepid, but totally unconscious that nature had gifted him beyond the youthful companions among whom his tutors rated him a shining meteor; and it was from this very conviction Malcolm prided himself on ranking him as his dearest friend. As such they parted, when Montrose first embarked in his country's cause, while succeeding years saw a continuance of it, disinterested and firm on the part of the latter, but on the former's tinged by the baneful envy which Lionel's heroic valour failed not to excite, whenever fame proclaimed added proofs of his martial deeds. This was a flame which, once lighted, needed no additional fuel to feed its violence; but

Montrose

Montrose was fated, not only to break the bond of amity which had so long, to the surprise of every one, subsisted between them, but to convert his early friend into a deadly foe.

A heart so formed for friendship could not long remain insensible to the charms of love, and at an early age, Lionel became the enraptured husband of a woman, much too lovely to escape the admiration of Malcolm, to whom she was introduced shortly after her marriage. He was still single; but had Mrs. Montrose been the same, and even disengaged, he would never have sought her as his wife, since an alliance with her could neither add to his rank or fortune; and difficult as it might now be to make her his mistress, the design was not wholly impracticable, since his passion for her had already, in imagination, borne down all opposition—removed every impediment, at least to the attempt; for in proportion as his love for

her

her increased, his friendship for Montrose diminished, till he became hateful to him, as being the husband of a woman so lovely, and whom he had sworn to seduce from her duty. Nature had gifted his external appearance with more than manly beauty, but in so doing blended it with a heart capable of degrading the form he bore, by rendering it in general a curse to those with whom he associated in the female world, since few whom he deemed worth obtaining had power to resist the spell which doomed them to become his victims. Mrs. Montrose did not promise to become an easy prey, but it rendered him more determined; and he omitted no opportunity of convincing her, that it was at the shrine of beauty, not friendship, his adoration was paid. Painful as was the discovery her excellent understanding had made, she carefully concealed it from the husband of her affection, at the same time behaving in such a manner

to

to lord Malcolm, that he could not for a moment suppose even her vanity was gratified by his unjust preference. But, as if disregarding the consequence, his attention to her was redoubled, till even Lionel was alarmed, since neither the disinterested friendship, which he had never violated, nor his implicit confidence in the spotless purity of his Emma's fidelity, could erase the conviction of his own senses, that she had inspired Malcolm with love; but it was a subject too delicate for the ear of either, and he buried the fatal surmise deep in his own heart, till the base confession obliged Mrs. Montrose to seek from her husband that protection, which she foresaw was her only shield against the determined arts of his faithless friend.

It was an injury even the noble soul of Montrose could not pardon—an insult not to be brooked in silence. Waving, therefore, alike the ties of former friendship, and the title which gave him a

mean

mean superiority, he demanded satisfaction as a man.

Malcolm accepted the challenge with rapture, and while his arm, nerved by revenge, sought the final destruction of his opponent, his mind became dauntless, from the impious expectation that his death would be a final triumph over wife and husband. But if he fights well whom a bad cause leads to the field of action, how much better defended is that man who, leaving his cause in the hand of Omnipotence, stands but on his own defence, and seeks only retribution for the injuries he has sustained! Malcolm, spurred by revenge, thirsted for victory, and to obtain it fought with fury; while Montrose, equally determined, but more guarded, parried blows which were meant to leave his Emma unprotected, and exposed to the future machinations of Malcolm, since they were evidently aimed at his life, but in turn gave those which were more effective

tive, till his sword having passed through the arm which supported his adversary's, the contest was decided by the former generously throwing down his, and leaving him to his own reflections, and the care of his attendants.

From that moment, Malcolm's lips never pronounced the name of Montrose unaccompanied by the bitterest curses revenge could stimulate him to utter; but the object of it was no longer in his power, having left Scotland on distant service, with his wife and the infant son to whom she had given birth.

Years succeeded the event, and lord Malcolm being engaged in new pursuits, forgot Montrose, either in the character of friend or enemy, till after his own marriage with a very amiable woman, when the fate of war again brought him to Scotland—no longer the happy husband of the blooming Emma, but a cheerless widower, bearing about him the sable

habiliments

habiliments of a rooted sorrow, and cherishing, with enthusiastic fondness, a lovely little girl, the only surviving wreck of his former happiness, for whom Mrs. Montrose had forfeited her own existence, a few months succeeding that in which she had consigned her smiling boy to an early grave.

Never had revenge been so gratified as lord Malcolm's, or eyes so feasted as were his, when by any chance they encountered the altered person of his former friend, on whose countenance the traces of a fixed but manly sorrow were so conspicuous; and he only regretted the satisfaction he derived from seeing him thus changed was to be transient, as major Montrose, having resigned his little Adela to the care of his sister for a few months, again rejoined his regiment, then under sailing orders, for a destination at that time too uncertain to allow of his taking her with him. The infant Adela was at that period a being

too insignificant to partake of the resentment which through life followed her father, with whom she had been some years before lord Malcolm even suspected she had left Scotland, and to which she returned only on the death of her justly-lamented parent. But the aunt, under whose hospitable roof some of her early days had passed, and who would have cherished her with a mother's fondness, was no more: distant relations, therefore, and those uninterested in her welfare, were all that now remained to the sorrowing girl; but even their unwelcome asylum was a protection she needed, and her affectionate heart saw not the extent of their unkindness, in the gratitude she felt for the little they so reluctantly bestowed; and all was more than compensated by their allowing her to breathe the same air with Alphonso Malcolm, who had sought her affection from the period of his having met her at a neighbouring ball. The

The disinterested generosity of her father's disposition, extending even to his bitterest enemies, had prevented his ever having named lord Malcolm as such. She was therefore a stranger to their knowledge of each other, and a thousand circumstances had combined to render Alphonso equally so. He believed, therefore, the profession of her father, to which he knew lord Malcolm was partial, and the honour with which he had acquitted himself in it, would plead powerfully in favour of his orphan Adela.

But no words could do justice to his horror, when with more than phrenzied fury he vociferated her name, at the same time loading herself and parent with every opprobrious term imagination could invent—"And thou, accursed viper!" he exclaimed, "not satisfied with for ever blasting a father's hopes, must seek the deadliest venom with which thou couldst sting him! Know, that as

there lives not a being in creation but that I would have pardoned, save Adela Montrose, so my life shall now be exhausted in devising curses for thy torment, and on thee and thine will I satiate that revenge which her father's death left unappeased—but I never loathed even him more than I now do thee;" and the blow which nearly levelled Alphonso with the dust, as he spoke, proved that more than common hatred must have usurped the affection he had so long enjoyed unrivalled. It rendered him for some minutes totally insensible of what had passed, and he almost regretted the return of reason, which brought with it a retrospect too painful for remembrance: at first he determined again to seek lord Malcolm, for he had left the room; but the instant appearance of a servant, who he conjectured might be the bearer of some message, arrested his attention—the man appeared embarrassed; and, after much hesitation,

hesitation, entreated he would pardon him for delivering an order, which he was doubtless little prepared to receive.

Alphonso, after what had passed, had every thing to expect, therefore assured him—"He was ready to hear lord Malcolm's commands, of whatever nature they might be."

"They are then, sir—" and again his voice faltered—"they are, sir, that you instantly quit his house—never to return."

"Be it so, my good Jaques," he replied; "for lord Malcolm's house is no longer a fit residence for me, when I have no longer a father in it;" and with trembling steps he prepared for his departure. But he was too justly beloved by every domestic in lord Malcolm's service to be allowed to do so unattended, and the blessings which followed him as he passed the threshold served but to increase the agony

with which his already oppressed heart and wounded spirit were tortured.

His own servant was unfortunately absent at the time, and without considering the agitated state in which he must appear before Adela, he thought only of finding consolation from her, for all his unmerited wrongs, though he determined but partly to explain the transactions of the morning—a resolution that vanished on beholding her.

The undeserved insult he had endured appeared to acquire added poignancy from reflection, while concomitant circumstances increased the bitterness of that despair with which he was enveloped, and produced a temporary madness, which for some time rendered him regardless of the consolation he had sought as his only solace. But her soothing voice yet retained its power over his even insensible mind, and while he clasped to his throbbing heart the blessing he deemed worthy every sacrifice

fice he had made, Hope whispered "he had much to live for;" and he made the effort. It was, however, long a doubtful one, till youth, and the unwearied attention of the wretched Adela, raised him from the verge of that grave, which had appeared so long to await him, and in which he would willingly have for ever buried all remembrance of the disgraceful blow, but that it must have left his hapless wife exposed to the rage of his merciless father. From the effects of his direful curses it was not possible to shield her, since poverty, the first great evil, already alarmed him by its too certain approach, and threatened to prove that the maledictions of an incensed parent were indeed most justly to be dreaded.

Lord Malcolm's munificence, tallying with his love for Alphonso, had ever infinitely exceeded his own wants; but the generous liberality of the latter left him improvident of the future, as at

that time he would have believed his own necessities could need no supply. When he had outlived a father's love, a long and dangerous sickness had now so exhausted what he possessed, that barely sufficient remained to obtain what appeared the only resource, a subaltern's commission in the army, on which scanty subsistence himself and Adela, the beloved being whom he had rescued from dependence, to plunge into want, must now exist. But this was comparative happiness to a separation from her; and a dread that lord Malcolm might even meditate such a step rendered him more impatient to join any regiment that would, by his so doing, remove him from Scotland; but, as if his disobedience was to receive its full reward, obstacles unthought of, impediments never expected, incessantly occurred, to frustrate his design, and from month to month procrastinate the attainment of his commission, during which period

Adela

Adela became a mother.—Alphonso gazed with rapture on the blooming pledge, but his joy was tinctured with the melancholy reflection, that impending curses hung over its infant head, and threatened destruction to its every future prospect: the young Alphonso was indeed the "child of misery, baptized in tears;" for accumulated evils, the result of increasing poverty, daily robbed its parents of the faint hope which had sometimes promised a remission of their sufferings, when an only friend, whose long and proved fidelity evinced him such, and whose absence had augmented all that they endured, returned to behold a reverse of fortune, which he believed incompatible with Alphonso's fate. To his friendly confidence the extent of every suffering was unfolded—the cruel indignity he had sustained revealed, and from friendship he received every solace the nature of his situation could admit: to his purse Alphonso

was indebted for pecuniary favours, and to his interest for almost instantly obtaining the commission which, under so many pretences, had been so long detained.

Nor did his generous enthusiasm in their welfare then stop; for, unjust as he conceived lord Malcolm's conduct, and dear as Alphonso had ever been to him, he could not wholly exculpate the latter from having erred in a point of duty due from him to a father, hitherto so indulgent. His heart was therefore set on effecting a reconciliation, he was willing to believe not wholly impracticable; but a moment served to convince him, on the first interview for that purpose, nothing less than the final destruction of the wretched family thus sacrificed to revenge and disappointed hopes, could satisfy the resentment which had abated nothing of its violence.

Lord Malcolm derived a savage pleasure

sure from the knowledge he failed not to obtain of all that passed, and assured their generous mediator, his only consolation was derived from a conviction of their daily misery. Shocked to find that human nature could undergo such a revolution as lord Malcolm's had done, and not less disgusted with his inhumanity, he left him, to empower the injured son to join his regiment, which was then about to embark for England; and thither he was accompanied by Adela and his infant boy; but scarcely had they landed on its hospitable shore, when they were again destined to re-embark on foreign service—a movement which must, for a time at least, remove them from lord Malcolm's vindictive power.

CHAPTER V.

THUS perished the fond hopes of an ambitious father, for lord Malcolm now considered himself as childless, and looked around him in vain for the promised comforts of his future years: the loved boy, whose open virtues daily added to the love he bore him, and for whom he once implored its choicest blessings, was no longer his fond companion, and even the unnatural satisfaction derived from witnessing the sufferings of the oppressed, deserted, and insulted Alphonso, was denied, since he also was torn from him; and Madeline, if by chance a remembrance of her intruded upon his agonized mind, was placed in the background of his

his present affliction. The mansion in which he had reared Alphonso was become hateful, because every apartment in it reminded him of the lost ingrate, and he wandered from place to place, a "living monument of misery." If a numerous retinue, or display of magnificence surpassing his wealthiest neighbours, could have concealed the bursting heart which throbbed indignantly beneath his embroidered vest, lord Malcolm would have been thought a happy man; but his sorrow was too poignant for dissimulation; it added much to the irritable temper he had always possessed, contracted his brow into an incessant frown, and tinged his whole countenance with a degree of asperity which plainly indicated he was the victim of internal struggles. Those who knew the source condemned but could not pity him, while strangers, only judging it must arise from domestic misfortunes, silently extended that commiseration for which,

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if sensible of it, he had not thanked them.

His health at last visibly declined, and by the advice of a favourite physician he was prevailed on to visit the south of France, where he spent some few months, and on his return took immediate possession of the long-deserted castle in the vicinity of Mrs. Duncannon's neighbourhood, though for what motive, or by what authority, no one presumed to inquire. It was rumoured he had purchased the whole demesne, but of whom was still to be discovered, since no one had resided in it, or even appeared to claim the estate, since the death of its last owner, lord Stuart, and who had certainly died without issue. But the residence of so rich and powerful a man among them was considered a desirable acquisition, and he everywhere found himself received with that homage at all times so flattering to his innate pride, which his grief had served rather to augment

augment than diminish; but his sore mind sought daily for incidents that could, by interesting him, spread a temporary forgetfulness over the power of memory, and his faithful servant failed not to select such as might aid the design and promote the desired effect. Hence the energy with which he dwelt upon the singular circumstance of such a woman as Mrs. Duncannon residing in the lone house on the bourn side with so few attendants, though her whole appearance was calculated to strengthen the supposition that she was not altogether what she decidedly wished to be thought. Who then could she be? or whence the motive of her seclusion? became next the subject of his restless inquiries, and promised to hold in suspense, at least for a time, every other theme.

For several days he rode in expectation of obtaining even a casual view of his fair neighbour, but, as he petulantly

averred

averred on his return to Leopold, his wishes were eternally marred by disappointment, as indisposition prevented Mrs. Duncannon from enjoying her accustomed walk; and though her indisposition was by no means serious, Seymour refused to leave her even once a-day for that purpose himself, and still persisted in sharing a confinement which Jessy enlivened by her constant attendance; for Mrs. Duncannon now regretted even her temporary absence, and would have gladly taken her entirely under her own care, had not many circumstances combined to render the abode of her rustic parents a more proper asylum. But she omitted no opportunity of giving her every advantage derived from improvement, and looked forward with a pleasing expectation to the period in which, deprived of her beloved Seymour's society, she might find a resource in the cultivated understanding of the little Jessy, modelled as it would be

be under her own tuition—an event which she nevertheless dreaded, though she knew it was unavoidable; for, extensive as was her own knowledge, and much as she had in her power to impart, he had nearly reached that age in which a tutor was becoming essentially requisite to such parts of his education as she did not believe herself competent to undertake, though his progress in learning had hitherto left her little to regret from the want of one.

Returning health having enabled her to resume the daily rambles of which for a short time she had been abridged, the delighted peasants once more with rapture hailed her approach among them, nor was lord Malcolm less gratified to hear Leopold had met her returning from a round of humble visits; and on the following day, understanding she had passed the castle in her way to a small copse, in which she frequently rambled, he set out, accompanied only by

by his servant, and relying on chance to favour his wishes of an interview.

Having followed the path it was most probable she had chosen, and entered the woody recess, intent on the purpose which led him there, his attention was arrested by the sound of different voices in conversation at that moment. In answer to some one who ceased speaking, a female voice replied—" But we are not, my dear boy, to form hasty conclusions, or draw inferences which may be prejudicial to those whose actions we presume to scan; neither are exterior appearances to become the criterion by which we would judge another, for they are often fallacious. Found your judgment therefore at all times on a thorough knowledge of the parties concerned, and never suffer your opinion to be biassed even by the breath of a multitude, much less the vague reports of servants, who are too often instigated by some mean or servile motive, and in such cases rarely

rarely founded on the basis of truth: not that I would hence infer they are an unimportant class of people—far from it; they have their uses in society, have relative duties to fulfil, which render them, in their station, of equal importance with their lord, and many of them are more valuable members of the community. I am certainly displeased with Gilbert," added the same voice, in the mildest accents, "for endeavouring to interest you in a matter with which he must himself be totally unacquainted; but it is a subject we will discuss more fully at a future period."

Struck by the peculiar sweetness of the tone in which every word was uttered, lord Malcolm had involuntarily stopped, but scarcely had they ceased, when conscious that, though unintentionally, he had been guilty of a weakness, he pursued the winding path, which brought him instantly in front of a rising ground, commanding an excel-

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lent prospect of the surrounding country, and on which Mrs. Duncannon, Seymour, and Jessy were seated. A moment served to convince him the interesting stranger then before him could be no other than the one he sought, and the situation in which they met favoured in every respect his wish of addressing her. She had, with her youthful companions, risen on his approach, and in the most graceful manner returned the obeisance made on his part, and was retiring, when lord Malcolm entreated his presence might be no interruption to her enjoyment of the scene then before them, adding—"I have ever, madam, been an enthusiastic amateur of Nature's works; but your selection of this beautiful spot proves you a connoisseur in them, since my short residence in this part of the world has never yet presented me a prospect altogether so picturesque."

"Your walk, sir, has probably been limited

limited then," she replied, with her usual ease of manners, uncertain that it was lord Malcolm to whom she spoke, though from the description she had had of his person, she felt more than half disposed to believe it could be no other, "otherwise there are in these parts many situations equally desirable, in point of prospect, though habit has familiarized this to me, from its being more retired."

Pleased thus to have drawn her into conversation, he expatiated largely on the surrounding scenery, which imperceptibly led to the subject of drawing; this in turn gave place to history, and her comments on each proved the knowledge she possessed must have been derived from an excellent education, and that highly cultivated.

During their conversation, his eyes had more than once rested on the open features of Seymour; but though nothing could be more strikingly interesting,

ing, he neither appeared to notice him, nor the lovely girl who was busily employed in forming the flowers he culled for her into wreaths; and when Mrs. Duncannon summoned them to take their leave, he returned her parting compliments without condescending to remember she was accompanied by children, whose uncommon deportment at their age would have been so obvious to any other beholder: yet he returned to the castle, pleased in having convinced himself Mrs. Duncannon was even more than report had named her, and determined to believe there was a mystery attached to her secluded life worth his elucidating; but, as if for the first moment recollecting she was not alone, he sternly demanded of Leopold whose children were the companions of her walk?

"One, my lord," he timidly replied, "is the peasant girl whom they call the Rose of Donald's Cottage, from her uncommon

common beauty, and the other is Mrs. Duncannon's son."

A deep-drawn sigh, on the part of his lordship, told there was even yet a string which vibrated to a name once so dear; but he suppressed its utterance, and added, with eagerness—" Then Heaven has given her also one of its direst curses, which in your relation of her household you omitted to name."

Conscious this was the case, Leopold remained silent, and lord Malcolm changed the subject. But every thought was now engrossed by plans that might enable him to become better acquainted with his fair neighbour, none of which had promised success, when a letter from England was delivered to him: the superscription he knew to be that of his discarded Madeline, and at any other time it would have been consigned to the flames unopened; but Mrs. Duncannon had harmonized every feeling, and having almost unconsciously broken

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the seal, his eyes eagerly ran over intelligence from which he derived a twofold pleasure. Death had removed one being obnoxious to his remembrance, and by leaving his daughter a widow, had opened a field for the speculation that at present interested him infinitely beyond his sanguine expectation. In the bitterness of grief, she related the recent loss of her husband, to whom she was fondly attached; and though she presumed not to ask an asylum in her father's house, entreated he would extend that protection to herself and child, which her widowed state demanded.

"I will do more, Madeline," he mentally exclaimed; "thou shalt return to my roof, since he who tore thee from thy parent tree is happily no more."

But paternal love had no share in the arrangement thus hastily made in the deadened breast of lord Malcolm; no benign virtue, no social duty existed, in thus receiving his long-deserted and almost

almost forgotten daughter; he was influenced by no other motive than that of laying a foundation for her visiting, and of course being visited by, the Recluse of the Bourn—a point he was determined, if possible, to accomplish.

To chance, therefore, lady Madeline was indebted for what she was willing to believe convincing proofs of her father's returning love, in a letter commanding her to lose no time in hastening to Dunwarden Castle, where she would find a future residence, provided she could accept his offer on the prescribed conditions, which were, that she should resign the son of whom she spoke to the guardianship of any person she might think proper to choose; as, though it was his intention to provide for him, it was his fixed determination never to see him.

Attributing this resolution wholly to the fatal disobedience of Alphonso, she saw not the extent of its unkindness, and so far

from accusing her father of severity, pitied the feelings by which she believed him actuated; her affectionate heart anticipated the probability of soothing by filial attention his wounded spirit, and, dear as was her child, she felt justified in parting with it on the terms proposed, which, from never having expected, she more gladly accepted.

Frederick Sinclair had already reached his fourteenth year, four of which he had passed at a public seminary, and as his mother was perfectly satisfied with the advantages he obtained in every branch of his education, which her own partiality and little knowledge of the world induced her to believe was already completed, she did not hesitate to leave him wholly in the care of the gentleman with whom he had been so long a resident, while she hastened to Scotland, impatient to receive a father's embrace, which promised to await her arrival there. But a cold repulsive salute, on the part of

of lord Malcolm, checked the ardour which prompted her to shed on his bosom the mingled tears of joy and sorrow. Yet he bade her welcome, and she endeavoured to forget the coolness of her reception, from a conviction that her own and brother's conduct had contributed much to render her father what he was, and rejoiced that he had even allowed her the privilege of being so near his person, for much as they were estranged to each other, the very term of father carried with it a magic charm. But lord Malcolm derived not the same pleasure from the society of his child; her attentions were soon irksome, and to avoid them he passed whole hours in the seclusion of his own apartment, almost regretting that he had ever allowed her to become an inmate of the castle; since it too late occurred to him, that should he succeed in bringing his daughter acquainted with Mrs. Duncannon, she would not, like Madeline, give up the company of her child to

please his capricious humour, or visit where her son's presence would be deemed an intrusion, and he felt that the knowledge he had been so long anxious to obtain could not recompense him for the misery of being compelled occasionally to receive them both; and, with the caprice that now invariably formed the contour of his whole conduct, he determined not only to forget he had ever been interested in the fate of Mrs. Duncannon, but studiously to avoid the chance of seeing her, since he learnt that Seymour was her inseparable companion.

Leopold was made acquainted with his lord's intention, and with regret saw him again relapse into his former torpid state, from which his late visionary scheme had no longer the power of withdrawing him; nor was the gloomy ancient edifice he inhabited calculated to remove the threatened evil, since its gothic structure and gloomy apartments

ments frequently threw a damp on the conviviality of the numerous domestics, which the liberality of their lord could not wholly disperse. Hence it sometimes happened that a shadow, though reflected from the very being it terrified, or the wind passing through the long galleries, occasioned by the aperture of a half-closed door, has raised for the moment false alarms, which it required all the powers of reason to disarm, and which was amply administered by the worthy old steward, who alike despising the pusillanimity of the men, and pitying the weakness of the women, never failed to argue with so much eloquence on their ideal fears, at the same time so satisfactorily explaining the cause, that he eventually crushed the hydra superstition, which, but for his sage counsel, was beginning to render his fellow-servants as miserable as their lord, though from a different cause. Nor were these terrors confined merely to the domes-

tics, since the widowed Madeline, uncheered by the society of one female, her own woman excepted, wandered through the dreary abode till her mind, weakened by her recent loss, became more susceptible of fear than she had believed it possible she could be; still less could she reconcile to herself how lord Malcolm, possessing an estate which wealth and taste had contributed every thing to make desirable, should prefer the solitary and ruinous one he now occupied—an observation she ventured to make one evening, when he appeared more communicative than usual.

"Because," he replied, with an asperity that made her regret having put the question, "ingratitude, by making the one hateful, drove me from it; and this, from being better suited to the present tenor of my mind, is preferred. Chance," he added, "while I was on the continent, placed me in company with a man

man who holds this estate in trust for an heir not yet found; he mentioned the situation, which I recollected, from having some years since observed it, in a tour I made, but at that time little supposed the residue of my wretched life was to be spent within its mouldering walls; but such will be the case, unless, which is not very probable, the rightful owner should claim it, as on those terms only I now hold it. It is a sorry residence, Madeline, for thee, but as you have always used the freedom of your own mind, my invitation imposes no shackles from which you cannot easily emancipate yourself."

She felt the sarcasm, but a starting tear was the only reply.

Lord Malcolm observed it, and strongly as his stubborn heart resisted the feelings nature designed a parent should know, in this instance indirectly owned its power; for softening his voice, he continued—" Madeline, I am become a

bankrupt in happiness, have for ever renounced the world, and have therefore nothing more to do with society; neither canst thou enjoy it here, without trespassing on that seclusion, a thirst for which brought me to this spot, nor will I have it violated, even by Mrs. Duncannon."

Madeline listened with astonishment, for it was a name she had never before heard; and lord Malcolm, vexed at the error into which he had so involuntarily plunged himself, confusedly added—"I meant to have said—there is, I understand from Leopold, a lady in this obscure neighbourhood, who, if known, might make your residence in it more supportable, whose appearance speaks every thing in her favour, and with such an associate, Dunwarden Castle might be deemed less solitary. But she has a companion that, were I to encounter during her visits to you, would remind thy wretched father of a vulture, whose fangs

still

still tear his wretched heart, and make every being hateful to his sight that bears the name of son. Oh, Alphonso! has time no power to dissolve the tie which binds my doating soul to thee? Why, when thy execrable ingratitude has reduced me to the verge of the grave, on which I linger only to behold the extent of thy misery, does accursed memory treasure up every harrowing reflection, now only replete with barbed arrows—incessantly whisper what thou wert before I had vowed to hate thee, and place before my aching eyes the idol once dearer than life or light, when I would only remember thee as a murderer? for thou hast murdered my peace, and sealed thy father's eternal perdition, since heaven could not be such if thou wert exiled from it, and thither thou canst not enter, laden as thou art with a parent's heavy curse, which never can be revoked."

"In mercy say not so, my father!"

said the trembling Madeline, as she clasped lord Malcolm's knees, at whose feet she had prostrated herself, almost unconscious of the motion: "Even now is the godlike attribute mercy pleading in thy softened breast, and here will I kneel till the blessed pardon passes those lips which were never framed to curse thy hapless offspring. Speak, my lord! say only that Alphonso——"

And she stopped, as if awed by the temerity which had induced her to utter a name she had been so imperiously commanded never to repeat; but she might have proceeded unreproved—torn by the contending emotions of his own mind, he disregarded both the appeal and situation of his kneeling child, till encouraged by the silence which affection for the banished Alphonso construed as favourable to his cause, she again ventured to say—"Dare I believe my brother has yet a friend?"

Starting from her hold, he exclaimed, in

in a voice that thrilled every nerve—"*Yes, he has a friend*—for that friend he became a parricide—for that friend bartered prosperity for poverty—madly forsook a doating father, and with that friend he now enjoys curses that hourly remind him of the sacrifice he has made. Tell him, Madeline, if you know the spot which holds him, I have never revoked a curse my lips pronounced against him——"

He was proceeding, but the extended form of the now senseless Madeline arrested the powers of utterance: her spirits, weakened by the solitary life she led, rendered her unequal to the task she had undertaken, and buoyed up with the too sanguine expectation that the moment was arrived in which a mediator only was requisite to gain over, as she believed, her relenting father to the exiled Alphonso, she was altogether unprepared for the awful sentence, which destroyed even a plea for hope, and

which had no sooner passed her parent's lips, than she sunk motionless before him. Awed by the deathlike paleness which had passed over her still beautiful features, he raised her from the ground and folded her in his trembling arms; but at that moment, as if nature waged war with his children, and delighted to make him act in opposition to his own wishes, he either saw, or fancied he did so, in Madeline's face, an expressive resemblance of his lost son, sufficiently strong to shake his already agitated nerves, and reduce him even to woman's weakness. A moment only he gazed, imprinted an impassioned kiss on her yet cold lips, and having placed her on the sofa, rung the bell with violence.

Leopold instantly obeyed the summons, when lord Malcolm, glad of any pretext to leave the room, harshly commanded him to stay with his daughter, and that himself would send her woman immediately; though such at that moment

ment was the perturbed state of his mind, that it is more than probable he would have neglected to do so, had he not encountered Mary in the way to his own room; and then, as if unconscious of the necessity there was for her immediate attendance, he merely said, her lady wanted her, and passed onward to the apartment, in which he shut himself up, to elude, as it were, the incessant tormentor of his wretched existence. But in vain he did so; there is an attendant whom neither bars nor locks have dominion over—whom the destined victim still finds at his side, though he mingles in the busy crowd, the full blaze of the brilliant circle, paces the solitary confines of his closed chamber, or stretches his weary limbs, stiffened by iron fetters, in the condemned cell.

Years had now seen such an attendant, the unappeased scourge of the virulent lord Malcolm: he had thrust out from his paternal roof the child of his beatified

beatified Louise, the fond and faithful wife whose last breath had so solemnly consigned him to a father's care. True, he had not become the murderer of that child, but murder is not the only crime of which the conscience takes cognizance: he had obliged that son, once so exemplary for duty and affection towards him, to become a forlorn exile, enduring all the horrors of increasing poverty, and doubly wretched under the heavy penalty of a father's malediction, and which extended even to the innocent offspring of that persecuted child of sorrow. This he had done, and for this conscience hourly upbraided him: in vain his disappointed views, his mortified pride, vindicated his cause, by proving that it was a father's prerogative to discard a disobedient son; blasted ambition, ungoverned passion, unrelenting violence, could not conquer the small still voice, that incessantly whispered he had done wrong.

CHAP-

CHAPTER VI.

SEATED in his arm-chair, around which no smiling pledges of his Alphonso's existence "climbed to snatch their grandsire's kiss," as he had once fondly surmised they would do, he threw his aching eyes across the vacant space, happy only in the idea that he had escaped from a scene too painful for his weakened senses, wholly regardless of the situation in which he had left his daughter, with no other attendant than Leopold; but he was of late years too little accustomed to the society of the female sex to recollect the delicate attentions due to them, and had far too high an opinion of his servant's probity, to

to have seen any impropriety in his own conduct. Without, therefore, troubling himself to inquire if Madeline had recovered, he amused himself with reading, unconscious of the period which had intervened, when Leopold entered his room for orders; nor did he then notice what a more anxious father would have construed into ample cause for alarm—the altered countenance of his domestic, whose presence awakened the remembrance of his daughter's situation, and having merely learnt that she was better, but had retired to her chamber, he troubled himself no farther on the subject, than openly inveighing against her folly in irritating him by a conversation he had so often warned her to avoid; and Leopold, eager to elude the observation of his master by entering into conversation, made no farther comments on what had passed, and took the earliest opportunity of again leaving the apartment.

He

He had been many years a faithful servant to lord Malcolm, and by his honest worth acquired an ascendancy over his master, which enabled him to conquer his habitual splenetic humour more adroitly than any other person could do; and this, as is too often the case, by making him a decided favourite with his lord, lessened the good-will of his fellow-servants towards him; but conscious of his own integrity, he disregarded the sarcasms evidently levelled at the supposed motive of his unwearied zeal in his master's cause, namely, the future aggrandizement of himself, from that wealth which it was not probable the rightful heir would ever enjoy. But in this his enemies argued with the narrow ignorance of little minds, nor did they know the heart they judged: hitherto fidelity had been its leading traits; born and educated in humble life, he owed to his own perseverance, and the attention of

a good

a good old steward in the family, where his father had been head-gardener, the progress he had made in learning, and which had induced lord Malcolm to rate him above the common class of servants. This had created much jealousy in his household, but had never raised the object of that mistaken jealousy above himself. Actuated by the humane desire of contributing as much as possible to his lord's comfort, by soothing the extremes of passion to which he was so prone to give way, he found little leisure for other pursuits, and might literally be said to devote every thought and action to his lordship's service. But a few hours, even a shorter period, had worked a revolution in his nature, which made reflection painful, and staggered his own belief: the disinterested affection which had for years bound him to lord Malcolm was, in one fatal moment for them both, weakened.

When his lordship had left the room

to

to summon, as he said, Mary to her lady's assistance, Leopold, silently condemning the harshness which he did not hesitate to believe had reduced her to the situation in which she still lay, approached the senseless Madeline, with those sentiments of respect he had ever entertained for her, mingled with increasing pity for the unpleasant life she led, subject to the unkindness of so severe a father; but scarcely had his eyes rested on her pallid features, more interesting than he had ever seen them, than a sentiment altogether new pervaded his soul.—"Beautiful victim!" he silently ejaculated, "who could injure excellence like thine? Would that Leopold had wealth and power, or had been destined thy protector, even in poverty!"

Kneeling down, he clasped the inanimate hand, whose snowy whiteness dazzled his enraptured sight, while its touch, though cold as the silent grave, added fire to the fever which thrilled in every vein.

vein. Heavy and convulsive sighs promised returning life, but as that life slowly resumed its functions in the hapless Madeline, reason forsook the now distracted Leopold. Folding her to his bursting heart, he exclaimed—"Live, lady Madeline, if you would not see the veriest wretch in nature expire at your feet."

Slowly opening her languid eyes, but unable to comprehend what she heard or saw, she continued gazing in silence, until roused to recollection by words which had nearly deprived her a second time of that sense she had as yet imperfectly regained. Scarcely had he clasped her in his impassioned arms, than, heartstruck by the almost involuntary action, he relinquished the sacred burthen, but still continued kneeling by her.—"Hear me, lady Madeline," he continued, "in what I have no longer power to conceal, that from this moment my life is in your hands, for I have dared to love you; yet shall my daring presumption

presumption be concealed from every eye but yours."

Roused to energy by the feelings of wounded pride, without deigning to reply, she sternly demanded what had brought him to that apartment? and, with a strength of mind that ill accorded with her exhausted frame, commanded him to leave it instantly, as he would avoid the just resentment of lord Malcolm for his base ingratitude.

"I go, lady Madeline," he said, "to drag on in future a wretched existence, which you can terminate with a breath; for the moment that reveals my fatal secret will see me a corpse at your feet."

Terrified by what she believed proofs of insanity, and distracted by the rapid succession of ideas which passed over her imagination, at a loss to know how she had been left alone with this apparent madman, and still more astonished at the absence of her woman at such a time, she could only again desire him to

to send Mary to her immediately, purposely avoiding a subject which alike distressed and bewildered her with surprise.

"One word more, lady Madeline," he replied, "and I fly to obey your commands, which must henceforth be my law: say only you pity the being you behold thus hurled from happinesss to misery. Your forgiveness I dare not ask, for already my tortured brain is sensible of my crime's extent; but as you value lord Malcolm's comfort, do not add to the bitterness of his soul a knowledge of my involuntary guilt: habit has made me essential to him; but I solemnly swear never, never to survive his conviction of my forfeited integrity, and I ask only your pity."

Still commanding her assumed composure, she said—"Leopold, if my commiseration is indeed requisite to your peace, you have it, but a continuance of it depends on yourself; for know also, the instant you presume again to forget the

the respect due to the daughter of lord Malcolm, neither your threats nor my own lenity shall screen you from the just reward of your unwarranted presumption. Now leave me, lest I revoke what I have already said."

Without again speaking, Leopold left the room; but scarcely had he closed the door, when the fortitude which had been supported only by terror gave way, and had not a violent burst of tears relieved her oppressed heart, her woman would have found her reduced to the same situation in which the unfeeling lord Malcolm had deserted her. Unluckily for lady Madeline, Mary was hastening to an appointment made before she met his lordship, whose deliberate manner of issuing, as she supposed, her lady's commands, induced her to presume on the known forbearance of her temper by trespassing a few minutes, well aware it would be forgiven. Those minutes had passed so rapidly as to have been unconsciously

unconsciously protracted, till recollecting the summons, she was so hastily pursuing her way to the drawing-room as to leave Leopold barely time to say in passing, that lady Madeline had been impatiently waiting for her.

Accustomed frequently to surprise her in tears, Mary was less astonished than she would otherwise have been at the situation in which, on entering the room, she found her lady; but when, on rising to go to her own room, her trembling limbs refused their office, the affrighted girl entreated she would allow her to call assistance, or, at least, to acquaint lord Malcolm with her indisposition: this, however, she refused, and assuring her she should be better when she had slept, redoubled her efforts to gain her chamber. This with difficulty she succeeded in accomplishing, but had no sooner laid her aching head on the pillow, which promised to be a restless one, than all the misery of her present situation

tion presented itself with added keenness to her enfeebled mind.

Deprived by death of a husband whose affectionate attention had, in her opinion, more than compensated for the affluence she relinquished for his sake, she had no longer a protector sufficiently interested in her hapless fate to shield her even from insult, since she too plainly discovered, if lord Malcolm had ever felt for her a father's love, it was long since alienated, and the various instances of his harsh unkind treatment, which she had so often endeavoured to find excuses for, now appeared magnified. One being only in the world was interested for her—could appreciate her affection, and would return it—this was her child; but that blessing, all that destiny had left her, she was compelled to resign; and for what? to drag through a cheerless existence in hateful solitude, with a father whom, at this moment, she con-

 sidered

sidered every way unworthy the sacrifice she had made.

While she had fondly anticipated that her presence at Dunwarden Castle would have contributed to that father's comfort—would, by giving him a companion so affectionately interested in his fate as herself, have contributed aught to his cheerfulness, and by so doing softened the natural asperity of his manners, evidently increased by the life of seclusion he led, she had felt no other pang from that sacrifice than what naturally arose from parting with a child so dear to her, whose merits she had ever rated with extravagant partiality, but to whose numerous imperfections and glaring faults she was more than blind. Too late, however, she had found her utmost efforts, either to contribute to lord Malcolm's happiness, or change his inflexible disposition in favour of her exiled brother, were alike useless: the dreadful denunciation

ciation of protracted wrath still vibrated on her ear, and she now believed Alphonso's fate inevitable. To his real situation she was utterly a stranger, but her timid nature convinced her prosperity and happiness must be alike unknown to those who existed under such curses as she had herself heard lord Malcolm heap on his devoted child. His misfortunes, more than even fraternal affection, had endeared him to her, for the very few years they had spent together admitted not of that reciprocal love which forms the endearing bond between those children whose infant years have never known a separation. For his own sake, and that of the charming woman to whom she understood he was united, she would have rejoiced in his restoration to lord Malcolm's favour—to have seen him in possession of his natural rights; but now, how essential to her peace of mind was his presence, and how keenly did she feel the cruel deprivation!

Her residence at the castle had fully convinced her of the truth of Leopold's observation, that *he* was become essential to his lord's comforts; she had seen him soothe the irritable disposition of her father into composure, when no other of the domestics dared to stem it. Mary had repeatedly told her, that but for Leopold lord Malcolm must live alone, for nobody but Leopold could manage him, and that though the servants disliked his being such a favourite of their lord's, they owned how much they were indebted to him for his many good offices in the entire management of the household. Often she had heard her father himself assert, that to his faithful domestic he was indebted for a life which, but for his unwearied attention, must have sunk beneath the pressure of his aggravated woes. Under lord Malcolm's roof no one had been more uniformly respectful to herself, and no two beings stood higher in her esteem than

did

did Leopold and the good old steward, whose silver hairs had so often excited her admiration as a child, and who was now calmly descending the vale of years, firm in the conscious integrity which, from youth to manhood, had stamped his deserving character, and enabled him proudly to vaunt he had been a faithful steward to that family in whose service he had spent his best days, and in which he expected to die. Yet no base suspicion lurked in his liberal mind, that the preference given to Leopold by his lord, in many instances, tended in the least to reduce his own consequence in the family, or made him less important to his lordship's interest: on the contrary, he rejoiced that his youth and alacrity enabled him so much better to fulfil the thousand little offices that his more advanced age unfitted him for.

These concurrent circumstances left her still more at a loss how to act in her present situation. To acquaint lord Mal-

colm with an incident which had added poignancy to every other trouble she had to sustain, was perhaps to renew the phrenzied violence which had already terrified her into insensibility; for the offender had solemnly vowed, the moment which revealed his presumption should be his last, and this awe of the consequence might deter him from ever daring to repeat the degrading avowal he had made, though it could never erase the insult from her remembrance. Yet lenity in the present instance would perhaps effect more than resentment, and she felt, that little as lord Malcolm regarded her peace of mind, he would most deeply resent such an insult to the honour of his house, even though the author of it was a favourite, whose claims on his indulgence stood unrivalled. Again contrasting every former instance of Leopold's conduct with the last few hours, she ventured to believe he must have been in a state of inebriety, or was

probably

probably under the sudden influence of insanity; in either case it were most laudable not to notice what had passed; and, after various resolutions, in a fatal moment she determined to bury the mortifying occurrence in oblivion, at least until a repetition of the offence obliged her to alter that determination. But even this arrangement could not restore the tranquillity of which her mind stood so much in need: her agitated nerves had received a shock too violent to be easily restored, and in vain she anticipated that repose which, by spreading a temporary forgetfulness over the past, might enable her to encounter, on the ensuing morning, not only the stern brow of lord Malcolm, but that of his not less dreaded servant, whose expression of countenance, if presuming on the events of that night, would be far more insupportable, and not less embarrassing, should its marked humiliation silently implore her pity.

Among the various subjects that engrossed her sleepless hours, one occurred, which, though it partly led to the painful one which had succeeded it, had, in those more important events, been till then nearly forgotten. This was the mention of Mrs. Duncannon's name, and the singular manner in which her father had forbidden her forming any acquaintance with a person whom he nevertheless appeared to think a desirable companion for her. This lady had then a son.—"Happy mother!" she mentally exclaimed; "no unjust father has obliged thee to relinquish thy child's society, while the wretched Madeline, torn from hers, will be in time forgotten, even by her idolized Frederick, to whom she can communicate no other testimony of her unbounded affection than by heartless letters, which are at best inadequate to express the love I bear him, and always irksome to an age like his. I will at least," she added, "make some in-

quiry

quiry relative to this proscribed visitor, to a further intimacy with whom some unforeseen event may lead;" for the necessity of a female companion suited to her rank daily became more requisite. Her widowed habiliments, bad spirits, and lord Malcolm's love of seclusion, had hitherto rendered her indifferent as to the neighbours by whom they were surrounded; but the mention of one whose society might enliven in some degree the monotony of her present life promised a dawn of comfort; and though that comfort was but in embryo, she suffered her sick mind to rest with a degree of pleasure even on the scheme she would adopt for realizing it.

Morning at length dawned on her yet weary eyelids; but while it summoned industry to its daily task, rosy health to the joyous field, and the happy to their various pursuits, Madeline was listless—for to neither of these classes she owned affinity. A destroying fever preyed upon that

cheek where health had given added charms to her native beauty, and sorrow had dimmed the eye in which happiness once beamed triumphant; nor was it until the expiration of many days she felt sufficiently strong to take her accustomed seat at lord Malcolm's table, and even then the effort was made more to oblige him, than from any desire to leave her own room.

During her indisposition he had been uniform in his inquiries after her, and had more than once expressed a wish for her having medical advice, but this she strongly opposed, from a conviction that they could not 'administer to a mind diseased;' and as lord Malcolm partly judged her indisposition to have arisen from his too unguarded warmth, he did not urge the point, though he determined to be more circumspect in future; but in this he depended more upon her prudence in avoiding the subject most likely to irritate him, than on his own versatility

of

of temper. There was another point still more important to his daughter's comfort, on which he had ruminated seriously, and at last, by the interposition of his unerring counsellor Leopold, he had decided in her favour: this was no other than consenting to an interview between Madeline and Mrs. Duncannon, whenever the former's health should render it practicable.

As soon, therefore, as he had seated himself by her in the drawing-room, and with more than usual kindness inquired after her health, without reverting to the cause which had injured it, he selected from various cards which lay upon the table, one on which was elegantly written the name of Mrs. Duncannon, and which he presented her, remarking at the same time, that though no title graced the writer, he was led to believe, from his own observation, that Mrs. Duncannon was nevertheless a woman of fashion. "Her present mode of life,"

he added, "does not exactly correspond with this assertion; but she has doubtless cogent reasons for the seclusion in which she lives, and whatever those motives may be, I feel persuaded they will not prove her unworthy any attention you may think proper to shew her; and some return is due for the civilities of her inquiries after your health."

"You know Mrs. Duncannon, then, sir?" said the delighted Madeline, who impatiently listened to every word her father uttered; "and she has been at the castle during my indisposition?"

"Neither," he replied, "is exactly the case. The very short interview I once had with that lady (and which he related), allows me only the privilege of saying she is personally known to me; but it sufficed to convince me she is no ordinary character. Her card was left by the servant who was the bearer of her inquiries yesterday morning—a delicacy of conduct which has raised her still

still higher in my estimation. She doubtless felt the distinction, or at least that which apparently subsists between us; but we must convince her that the house of Malcolm, raised as it is by birth and fortune above the plebeian race, can nevertheless discern merit, even in humble life: you must, therefore, personally return her inquiries. It may be that she is not less in want of female society than yourself, for Leopold tells me she is a perfect recluse: should pecuniary circumstances contribute to render her such, my ample power may not be found unuseful."

How little, in this proud display of premeditated kindness to Mrs. Duncannon, and which was wholly the result of mean curiosity to learn her history, was lord Malcolm aware, that even the pompous harangue would have for ever closed every avenue to the intimacy he was desirous to establish between her and his daughter—that possessing a gen-

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teel competency for herself and Seymour, she would have resented, with a spirit no less proud than his own, his offers of assistance—that allied to blood, ennobled by *deeds, not titles*, she could have derived no consequence from his rank, and would have smiled her contempt of that power, ample as it was vaunted to be, which could contribute nothing to her comfort! There were moments when the kindly friendship of a mind congenial with her own might, by occasionally stealing on her seclusion, have left memory less opportunity of reverting to the past events of her early life; but as it was a resource she had never anticipated in her present residence, no sigh of regret—no disappointment followed.

Years had passed over the date of those sorrows which had given so material a change to her destiny; and there are few sorrows, few trials incident to man, over which time, the all-powerful hand of time, has not a sovereign influence.

Are

Are we blest with kindred ties—the beloved parent, the fond husband, a dutiful child, and deserving friend—endearing circle! how cherished in the heart alive to every social virtue!—they animate our pursuits in life—our very existance appears to depend upon their preservation, and affection whispers, life, deprived of them, must become a senseless void—happiness a blank. Yet the awful mandate, which ultimately includes every tie, goes forth, and to its minister, death, one by one we resign those beloved objects; the silent grave closes upon the parent to whom we owe our being—secludes, for ever, the husband of our affections, and conceals from our enraptured eyes the child in whom we lived again. Lastly, ingratitude, still more relentless than the cold dark grave, deprives us of the long-valued friend: still we live—time performs its evolutions, and by degrees we return to the duties of life; the sick and lacerated heart feels,

in

in the trying hour of affliction, the balm which mercy never yet withheld from the bruised reed; slowly it shakes off the sombre shade which despair had gathered round it, quickens the broken spirit, and instinctively raises the soul to Him from whom the consolation comes—the friend who, surviving time and space, knows no change—the God too seldom sought, too little known, in the untried hour of prosperity.

Trials such as these had marked Mrs. Duncannon's destiny: she had survived every relative tie, save the fraternal one which should have centered in a brother; but he had been the base destroyer of her domestic happiness—the enemy of her peace. This brother still lived, while those whose existence would have strewn her path through life with flowers mouldered in the grave; but the former she had long since forgiven—the latter remembered only with that delightful emotion which is the result of

sincere

sincere resignation. The fortitude which ever marks the Christian character had supported her through every trial; and new duties had been given her, to supply, in part, those she was formed to have excelled in.

Seymour was at present the principal object of her affection, and might be said to constitute her chief happiness; but that happiness was not unalloyed: his future prospects were as yet undecided—he was advancing towards an age when it would be requisite to adopt some plan for his establishment in life. Should he survive her, she had no relative to whose care she could resign him; and of the various designs which engrossed her contemplative mind, she had as yet determined on none; but her solicitude on his account did not so entirely occupy every thought as to leave her unmindful of the fellow-creatures by whom she was encompassed, and to whose comforts she could contribute so much.

Among

Among these, the interesting Jessy was a leading character: her sylph-like form, and beautiful countenance, had first attracted her notice; the unfolding beauties of her mind, and sweetness of disposition, had secured the esteem which followed; but to these motives were now added another, and still more powerful, claim to the interest she had ever felt in her welfare; it redoubled the energy with which she studied to improve her natural abilities—it was all that the ambiguity of that motive allowed her to do at present; yet she anxiously looked forward to a period which might justify the hopes she entertained, of seeing her favourite all that her humane and friendly mind anticipated.

With the interest of two such children at heart, and feeling her own consequence among her indigent neighbours, Mrs. Duncannon's leisure was too much occupied to leave her (though decidedly a recluse), either in want of that society

or

or pecuniary assistance which lord Malcolm, of his ostentatious munificence, was become so solicitous to offer her. The very little mystery attached to her life would have ill repaid his curiosity, for it fell far short of that which interested her, and which originated in his taking possession of the long-deserted mansion, Dunwarden Castle.

CHAPTER VII.

Gilbert's intimacy with the servants of lord Malcolm's household was the medium through which lady Madeline's indisposition had reached her knowledge; and with the same disinterested motive which would have actuated her towards the poorest peasant near her dwelling, that

that of innate goodness of heart, she had acted—but with this difference: her servant was dispatched with a card of inquiry to the castle, while the inmate of a wretched hovel would have heard her soothing voice, and from her own hand have received the nourishment she had herself prepared.

Satisfied with having performed her duty as a neighbour, and more gratified by the message received in return, which was an assurance of lady Madeline's improved health, she thought no more of the subject, and still less of the arrangements resulting from the circumstance of her inquiries, until the splendid equipage of lord Malcolm, many days afterwards, evidently approaching her humble mansion, attracted the notice of Seymour, who was seated at his usual studies, in a small apartment, whose principal decorations were the performance of its elegant owner, who, alike devoid of embarrassment or humble pride,

needed

needed no preparation to receive, with even courtly grace, her titled visitor.

This Gilbert knew, and proudly answered the domestic, whose loud knock echoed through their little dwelling, that his mistress was at home, without the fashionable ceremony of flying first to her sitting-room, to ask the question from herself; and as proudly preceded lady Madeline to the presence of Mrs. Duncannon, where he announced her name and rank with all the consequence he felt due to her high birth, in a manner highly amusing, both to his mistress and the fair convalescent, whose pallid features still bore testimony to her late indisposition; but her extreme solicitude to behold the interesting Mrs. Duncannon, and her recent conviction of lord Malcolm's mutability, which she every hour dreaded might induce him to revoke the promised indulgence allowed her in the moment of relenting harsh-

ness,

ness, determined her to lose no time in setting out for the bourn side.

No sooner, therefore, had returning strength enabled her to enjoy the air, than she sought the residence of her kind neighbour, whose polite address and easy manners made her an instantaneous convert to her father's opinion, that Mrs. Duncannon was decidedly a woman of fashion.

Remarks on the weather, with a few comments on the surrounding scenery of the retired cottage, were, as usual upon such occasions, the first topics of conversation, and to these the subject of Seymour's studies succeeded; for, with a heart tremblingly alive to all the feelings of a mother, Madeline gazed with admiration on the fine expressive features of the lovely boy, whom her father had named with such vehemence on the miserable night which had led to the present interview with himself and mother. Had lord

Malcolm

colm seen him at that moment, she thought, how sincerely she could have pitied his feelings—how easily have pardoned him for wishing to avoid his presence! for never had she seen so near a resemblance of the youthful Alphonso: at that age he had been most her companion—succeeding years had rendered them strangers to each other; it was therefore the boyish likeness that was more strongly impressed upon her recollection, as no picture of him had, by the express commands of lord Malcolm, "been visible to mortal ken," since his fatal act of disobedience.

A deep-drawn sigh, her constant tribute to the memory of this unhappy brother, followed the mental observation, as she inquired Seymour's age, the similitude of which to Frederick Sinclair gave a second pain to her affectionate heart.

"I also have a beloved son, Mrs. Duncannon," she said, "but am not, like you,

you, happy in his society: my father, unfortunately, is not partial to children at any age, and the natural pursuits of a boy at Frederick's would annoy him too much in his present state of health, which is very far from being good; I am therefore compelled, how reluctantly you as a mother will readily believe, to forego his affectionate attentions, and the delight of witnessing his progress in education, for perhaps some years to come—a circumstance I shall regret more than ever, since, with such a companion as your son, that improvement might have been accelerated; as it is, your sweet boy must allow me to cultivate his acquaintance for Frederick's sake, and I must teach them to esteem each other before they meet, for I yet trust they will do so."

Mrs. Duncannon replied—"A suitable companion to Seymour's years and understanding was among the very few occurrences that could augment the com-

forts

forts of her retired life, as he was now at an age to render such a companion desirable, but it was an indulgence he had as yet never known. Perhaps," she added, "your ladyship will smile, when I tell you, the deficiency has hitherto been supplied by the society of a little peasant girl, whose own merits, and the worth of her humble parents, have made such a favourite, that it is only when Jessy is absent from us we are sensible of a solitude, which I believe many of our neighbours find almost insupportable."

Lady Madeline had heard of the pretty rustic, by her usual appellation, and expressed her wish to see this acknowledged favourite; but Jessy was then at Donald's cottage; and lady Madeline having finished her visit, after a promise that it should be very shortly returned, re-entered her father's mansion, with a heart more buoyant than she had left it. Naturally sanguine, she already anticipated, with romantic ardour, a reme-

dy for all her trials, in the fascinating society of such a woman as Mrs. Duncannon, occasional visits to whose cottage would render Dunwarden Castle less irksome on her return to it, and whose conversation would, she felt persuaded, divest lord Malcolm's temper of half its austerity during her visits to them; for she continued to believe, that after what she had said relative to the exclusion of her own son from his grandfather's residence, Mrs. Duncannon would scarcely think of intruding Seymour at the castle—a conjecture in which she was right, since motives of delicacy would have prevented her doing so, from what she had learnt of lord Malcolm's situation before the interview with his daughter.

She had promised lady Madeline to return her visit soon, and politeness demanded she should do so; but she felt little or no desire to leave her humble abode for the magnificent residence of her lordly neighbour, whose character

she

she disliked. Yet lady Madeline had interested her: too ingenuous for disguise, the lovely widow had, even in her first visit, shewn Mrs. Duncannon a mind less cultivated than her own; but for every defect, her generous heart discovered a virtue that might more than compensate. Her extreme youth, the early loss of her mother, and unsuitable marriage with Mr. Sinclair, had, she believed, contributed every thing to the deprivation of those advantages which her birth entitled her to receive; and while she most sincerely commiserated the daughter, silently condemned the father, who could thus palpably have neglected the cultivation of such a mind as she evidently possessed.

On the other hand, the qualifications which too eminently distinguished herself to pass unobserved in a first interview, could not escape the quick discernment of her lovely guest, already prepossessed in her favour; and,

delighted with the valuable acquisition of such an acquaintance, she no longer dreaded lord Malcolm's severity, or felt apprehensive of future persecution from Leopold's presumptuous declarations, satisfied that, were even her own commands insufficient to restrain him from a repetition of the degrading avowal, he would stand in awe of Mrs. Duncannon's being made acquainted with the situation in which she was placed.

Armed, therefore, with this shield, which, to her artless mind, possessed no common power, she met lord Malcolm with the sweet smile expressive of the self-satisfaction she enjoyed, and with the conscious dignity of her superior rank gave her hand to Leopold, as he respectfully attended to assist her in alighting from the carriage. But Leopold was no longer the rash unguarded being who, in the moment of distraction, had forfeited the esteem of those to whom he was devoted; he had for ever fallen in the high

estimation

estimation of lady Madeline Sinclair, and to recover that step was already become the business of his life: his looks neither assumed the language of complaint nor the confidence of hope; the same unassuming demeanour—the same prompt obedience—the wish to please, alone appeared to actuate every movement; no one suspected he had ever, even in thought, deviated from the rectitude of conduct that had ever characterized him as a faithful servant, and even lady Madeline lost the keen remembrance of his past offence.

Mrs. Duncannon had returned her visit, and that visit was again repeated, before lord Malcolm had found resolution to be present during her stay; but Leopold had heard lady Madeline, in conversation with his lord, express her wish that she might be allowed to introduce that lady to him on her next visiting the castle, and it was only for her to express a wish in his hearing.

Lord Malcolm coolly replied—"His society could add little to the enjoyment they might derive from each other's company, and that as Mrs. Duncannon's visits were to her, his presence could be dispensed with."

Lady Madeline was silent; but scarcely had Mrs. Duncannon passed the compliments of the morning in their next interview, than his lordship entered the room, evidently with the purpose of bidding her welcome to Dunwarden Castle.

The salutations were returned with her usual ease, and the conversation becoming general, lord Malcolm heard, with increasing admiration, sentiments which did honour to the heart and understanding of his new acquaintance; and whether it was that his long estrangement from the fair sex had contributed to place her mental abilities in a more conspicuous point of view, or that the dulcet tones of her sweet voice had prevailed

vailed even over his gloomy mind, around which despair had forged its iron fetters, yet never had he so much wished to arrest the progress of time, as when Mrs. Duncannon arose to take her leave, and smiling named the hour, which proved the length of her visit.

But if time sped on rosy wings during her stay at the castle, he moved in tardy state through the period which must of necessity elapse before lady Madeline could find a plausible pretext for again breaking in upon the retirement of Mrs. Duncannon. Yet thither additional inducement now led her—she had seen the lovely Rose of Donald's Cottage, and had become no less attached to her than her kind patroness and the noble-minded Seymour; in short, the interesting trio formed at present her little world of happiness, and it was only the few hours spent with them, of which she might be said to have any real en-

joyment, and these she ever anticipated, the more so as her father's avowed admiration of Mrs. Duncannon led her to believe a more intimate knowledge of her worth and excellence would, by making her company more desirable and still more essential to them, reconcile lord Malcolm to the occasional presence of her son also, as he already knew she was too much devoted to him to enjoy any voluntary separation beyond that of a morning visit. Nor was it here the affectionate mind of lady Madeline rested—she had already transformed the pleasing acquaintance of a day into the zealous friend, whose soul-inspiring language was to soften the harsh asperity of lord Malcolm's manners—before whose mild influence she had determined, in her own mind, that his austere frown was to relax, and who, having beguiled him of his treasured grief, would, unconsciously to himself, reconcile him to society, and, perhaps,

perhaps, having harmonized his distempered feelings, open an avenue to returning affection.

At such a happy moment, could he look upon Seymour Duncannon, and his hitherto obdurate and inflexible heart not yearn to embrace the disinterested Alphonso, whose resemblance appeared to strengthen daily in the lineaments of her young friend? Pleased with the airy dreams her imagination had formed so consonant to her own wishes, she would have reluctantly believed that, like many she had before raised upon a similar foundation, they would prove evanescent—that already the little sun which had so unexpectedly gilded the rude battlements of Dunwarden was again retiring in murky state behind the dense clouds which had so long veiled its dilapidated turrets, even to the seclusion of hope.

Rendered happy by lord Malcolm's high commendation of Mrs. Duncannon,

and busied in preparing a present for Jessy, which was designed to purchase her love, time wore away, until his lordship's hint, and her own prompt inclination, saw her again at the bourn side, where a scene for which she was but little prepared presented itself. Seymour's looks spoke unutterable things—it was the silent eloquence that speaks to the heart; Jessy's azure eyes were dim with tears; while a shade of melancholy passed over the intelligent countenance of Mrs. Duncannon.

Madeline's sympathizing heart hovered on her trembling lip as she surveyed the group; but she was too great a favourite with them to be long kept in suspense as to the evident change which had taken place since they last parted.

"You find me employed in a painful task, lady Madeline," said Mrs. Duncannon, when the usual compliments of the day had been exchanged; "business of some importance obliges me to visit

visit England for a short time, but it requires more rhetoric than I am mistress of to persuade Jessy that our separation will not, at most, exceed a few months. Measuring both the time and distance of our journey by her affection for us, she has magnified both to an extent which she cannot contemplate with any degree of fortitude; and I am almost inclined to reprove her for giving way to a susceptibility which I have taken so much pains to correct, well knowing it is too often the source of endless misery in young and inexperienced minds, and as such should be early eradicated. Perhaps you will tell me—the most effectual method was to have left her mind uncultivated; but that in me would have been unpardonable: nature had given her endowments that rarely grace a peasant's offspring; I found her a lovely flower placed in an humble bed, but it would be my ambition to transplant her into a richer soil.

Powerful reasons," she added, "prevent my taking her with me, but the warm interest I have in her welfare will materially hasten my return to Scotland——"

"Tell me," said lady Madeline, impatiently interrupting her, "will you delegate the care of her to me during your absence? 'tis the only compensation I can have for a separation I shall feel scarcely less than your lovely *protégée.* I cannot supply your place, but I will cherish her with a mother's fondness; she shall be my constant companion—we will talk of you, anticipate your return, and together count the days which will restore you to us.—Tell me, Jessy," she continued, "will you live with me until Mrs. Duncannon returns to Scotland?"

It was, for cogent reasons, though of all things least expected, what Mrs. Duncannon most ardently desired; taking, therefore, the still weeping girl by the

the hand, she said—" You have, Jessy, no longer an excuse for grief, which would be highly blamable. We have yet to learn how far the good Donald will consent to part with you altogether for such a time; but the promised kindness of lady Madeline Sinclair demands that return which your grateful heart will, I am well assured, know how to make; and I shall leave you, fully satisfied that you cannot fail to be happy during my short stay in England."

" I will at least endeavour, madam, to be so," she replied; " but that is indeed all I can promise, except that I trust your ladyship will find I am grateful for the honour you have done me."

The delighted eyes of Seymour told how well pleased he was with the arrangement; and lady Madeline drawing Jessy to her, kissed off the truant tear that still, in defiance of every effort, continued to fall from the long and silken

lashes

lashes which concealed her downcast eyes.

Her ladyship learnt, with increasing regret, that only a day or two would be given to the preparations for this (to her unwelcome) journey; and she returned to the castle, not less disconcerted than she had left the little group at the bourn side, whom she was to see again previous to the departure of Mrs. Duncannon, and who in return promised to obtain from Donald the desired permission for Jessy's visit at Dunwarden Castle.

CHAP-

CHAPTER VIII.

Lord Malcolm heard, with evident vexation, that they were about to lose so desirable a neighbour, at the moment they were beginning to appreciate her value, but raised no objections to the humble substitute Madeline had chosen, and coolly said—"If she could derive amusement from the society of so young a companion, she was easily pleased," without recollecting that his own capricious temper totally debarred her from those more suitable to her years.

With her usual placidity she replied—"That Mrs. Duncannon's instructions had rendered the little Jessy a desirable companion, even at her early age; and that

that she regretted the improvement she had acquired, and the talents she possessed, should, from the temporary absence of her kind friend, be again lost in the obscurity of Donald's abode; for which reason she had promised to become her avowed patroness till the return of Mrs. Duncannon to Scotland, which, she was happy to say, would be in a few months."

"That," said lord Malcolm, when she had ceased speaking, "is one among the many instances of that lady's eccentric character, that she should draw from obscurity a rude child of nature, enlarge her mind, refine her manners, and by so doing teach her to despise her natural parents—for such will be the result—for the want of that knowledge she possesses, and which will ultimately be her ruin, only because she is beautiful. Misguided woman! let her beware, lest this rustic favourite, in gratitude for her mistaken kindness, should seduce her son.

To

To me it avails nought that she is lovely as Leopold represents her; for I cherish no fond idol, whom she can immolate at beauty's detested shrine—no victim to fall by her seductive smiles. But remember in your lessons, Madeline, to teach humility; and do not suffer her to forget, that although fortuitous circumstances have rendered her the inmate of a castle, she is nevertheless destined to remain the inhabitant of a cottage."

Happy to have so easily obtained her father's sanction to the admission of her young friend into the family, lady Madeline promised, that no ill-timed indulgence, on her part, should contribute to render Jessy unmindful of the duty she owed her humble parents, and still less forgetful of her own lowly situation: the same promise was exacted from her by Mrs. Duncannon, when having announced the entire submission of the good Donald and Margretta to her ladyship's wishes, she consigned the heart-

broken

broken Jessy to her future care, entreating her to make every allowance for the affection, which neither her years nor strength of understanding could restrain at such a moment. For this lady Madeline was prepared, conscious that herself, though by comparison only the acquaintance of a day, was little less affected by the kind farewell of Mrs. Duncannon and her sweet boy, who having most affectionately pressed her hand as he assisted her into the carriage, and looked the adieu his lips refused to give Jessy, re-entered the house, where he had passed so many happy hours in her beloved society, and from which, in a few short minutes, he was to depart for a strange country, where, though a thousand new and unknown pleasures might await him, Jessy at least could never greet his welcome sight.

The engagement which lady Madeline had entered into with Mrs. Duncannon, previous to their parting, was every way

way calculated to fill up the aching void, which she would otherwise have felt in the absence of this her new friend, since, independent of the charge of Jessy, she had voluntarily promised to supply her place among the indigent peasantry, whom she considered as her dependants: occasional inquiries were to be made relative to their several situations, and, in cases of necessity, their little wants supplied; for she had learnt, in her benevolent experience, to know how little will suffice to comfort those to whom no artificial wants are known: in short, lady Madeline began to feel a degree of importance from this her new office, to which she had hitherto been an entire stranger. With a heart kindly disposed towards every creature in existence, as a child she had never been suffered to witness the various degrees of wretchedness attached to the sons of poverty; as a wife, her power was much too limited to feed the hungry or clothe the naked:

naked: knowing this, she carefully avoided the abode of misery, and her short residence at Dunwarden Castle had hitherto afforded no opportunity of proving that her will to do good kept pace with her increased power to exercise it. Now her days passed lightly on, cheered by the unwearied assiduity of her young companion, whom time had reconciled to her loss, and in occasional visits to the poor cottagers, among whom Donald and Margretta claimed a large share of her attentions: Mrs. Duncannon had strongly recommended them to her particular notice—they were the friends of Jessy; and though she frequently ruminated on the singular event of so lovely a flower blooming in the rude soil of such a hamlet, the more so as Edward, though a ruddy handsome boy, was still a rustic, not unlike his sister, their honest fame had gained her respect, and many were the donations conveyed in her morning calls, to increase the comforts

forts which were procured by the indefatigable labour of the industrious Donald.

Lord Malcolm had frequently seen Jessy, in passing to and fro in the house; but as her time was chiefly spent in lady Madeline's own room, those interviews were merely casual, and his mind much too abstracted to regard the lovely countenance that made every beholder her friend, almost at first sight. His lordship's appearance had, however, a far different effect upon her youthful mind; his stern brow and haughty aspect, ill according with her own gentle manners, had so many terrors, that she would have thought no distance too great, that might give her a chance of evading his immediate presence; yet when they did meet, her respectful attention to his lordship was always returned with a formal inclination of the head; and though her trembling knees almost refused to sustain her through the ceremony of paying

ing her obeisance, she would involuntarily stop after he had passed, and continue to follow him with her eyes as long as it was possible she could observe him.

More than once lady Madeline had surprised her, contemplating with extreme earnestness a portrait of lord Malcolm, which hung in her dressing-room.

"Of what are you thinking, Jessy?" said her ladyship, on one of those occasions; "are you comparing his lordship's picture with his present countenance? If so, it will be to his disadvantage, for sorrow has contributed still more than age to the visible alteration."

"Oh, then," she replied, "I have been very ungrateful; for Mrs. Duncannon taught me to love and venerate every one whom sorrow had oppressed; but I feel I have never loved his lordship, yet I could always look at his picture, and love to do so, not because I think it is much

much handsomer than lord Malcolm, but——"

"But what, Jessy?" asked her ladyship, seeing she had stopped in evident confusion, as if regretting she had said so much.

"Because," she replied, blushing still deeper, "the eyes are so like master Seymour's, that I frequently forget there are any other features, and imagine he is looking as he used to do, when I have been repeating my lessons to him."

This was an observation entirely new to lady Madeline. She had noticed on her first visit at the bourn side the strong resemblance of Seymour to Alphonso, but now for the first time observed a similitude which evidently existed in the expression of the eyes, which had so forcibly struck her young charge —"I hope this likeness to your early friend will make you more partial to my father," she said, "as, though somewhat distant in his manners, he is not less disposed

posed to serve you, and time will reconcile you to his singularities."

Jessy would gladly have defined her own sentiments of lord Malcolm, but they were inexplicable to herself: she knew he was less happy than his fellow-creatures, and felt more than common pity for him; it was a sentiment that led her frequently to wish she could sooth his troubled mind, and never failed to interest her most warmly in his welfare. She was grateful for his allowing her to enjoy the protection of lady Madeline, to whom she became daily more attached; but her dread of his lordship increased with every succeeding interview, nor could she ever account for the extreme emotion she felt whenever he personally addressed her. Anxious, however, to convince his amiable daughter that no voluntary prejudice had made her unmindful of what she owed his lordship, she assured her—"It should, in future, be considered a part of her duty,

not

not only to esteem lord Malcolm for her sake, but his own also."

"You are a good girl," returned her ladyship; "and I only regret that my father is not as well acquainted with your worth as I am; but we must leave all to time."

At that moment Leopold entered the room with a letter—Jessy's beautiful colour, and animated eyes, plainly indicated that she at least hoped it was from Mrs. Duncannon; but the anxious countenance of lady Madeline, as she continued to read, awakened a thousand anxieties in her affectionate mind. Still, too respectful to venture an inquiry, she endured the painful suspense, till her ladyship mournfully folding up the letter, and raising her eyes, suffused in tears, in part relieved her worst apprehensions by saying—"Jessy, my poor boy has been ill, and still requires the affectionate attention of his fond mother, but it is denied him."

 "Surely,"

"Surely," replied the kind girl, "lord Malcolm will allow you to go to him instantly; or perhaps it would be better to bring him to the castle, for there we could all nurse him."

Her ladyship had reason to believe that neither would be permitted; nor did she know in what manner to name her son's indisposition, as her father had not once mentioned him since her arrival at Dunwarden, when the old steward had received orders to make the proper remittances for his education.

After consulting, therefore, with this venerable domestic, it was thought most expedient to leave the affair to Leopold's management, who, it was most probable, would have his lordship's commands to visit him in person, and by so doing ascertain the real necessity for her ladyship's undertaking so long a journey. There were objections to this plan in lady Madeline's mind, which delicately shrunk even from the idea of giving

Leopold

Leopold a plea for rendering her a service, and she was now about to invest him with one in which she was most tenderly interested; she would have a thousand endearing messages to transmit this beloved child—a still greater number of inquiries to make on the return of her messenger; for hitherto all communication with Frederick had been by letters, and his were filled with incessant complaints, not only of his school confinement, but what he termed the unjust banishment from his mother; and there were times when he did not spare the most bitter invectives on his unfeeling grandfather, who had thus separated them. His last letter had been written in all the languor of ill health, but expressed the same regret at their separation, in language still more distressing to his anxious mother, who had no resource but to entreat his patient adherence to his lordship's will, harsh as it appeared, or for ever to forfeit her fa-

vour, by openly avowing her son's discontent at the separation, so much against his wishes. In many instances Leopold was better calculated than any other person to explain the necessity of forbearance, and reconcile Frederick to his grandfather's humour; yet she felt an insurmountable objection to delegate the office to him; but as the faithful Sanford saw no obstacle to the counsel he had given, and lady Madeline could not state hers, Leopold was deputed in her name, by the good old steward, to acquaint his lord with the indisposition of Frederick Sinclair, and to entreat he might be permitted to visit him.

Struck with the delicate attention of his daughter, at a time when her maternal feelings might have so severely wounded his own, by expressing what she must have felt, he commended her fortitude in the highest terms, at the same time desiring his servant punctually to obey lady Madeline's commands, in

in whatever could most contribute to her satisfaction, and hastily changed the subject.

No sooner, therefore, had the devoted Leopold received her ladyship's instructions, than he set out on the ill-fated journey, from which lady Madeline anticipated that degree of comfort arising from conversing with the person who has really seen the object so dear to us, little supposing that interview was to lay the foundation of succeeding misery —that the early and habitual propensity to evil in Frederick's mind, now advancing to manhood, wanted only a fit instrument to set those propensities into action—and that Leopold's integrity, no longer supported upon the firm basis which had once rendered it invulnerable, might be easily contaminated, when his seducer wore the form of lady Madeline Sinclair's son.

CHAPTER IX.

SCARCELY had the lonely habitation of Margretta borne testimony to the indefatigable cleanliness of its now solitary inhabitant, who having arranged its humble but useful furniture, placed her wheel in readiness for its daily task, tied on her clean checked apron, adjusted the neat border of her coarse but snow-white cap, and seated herself at the little table, on which lay the sacred volume, where she daily read a portion of scripture, than her attention was arrested by the unusual sound of a carriage stopping immediately before the wicket, and as such a sight was long since become unusual, she continued to gaze with surprise

prise from the broken casement, until the lady, who had first descended, entered the neglected walk, which had once led through a flourishing little garden to the humble mansion: her apparent knowledge of the place, the air and figure, no longer left a doubt upon the eager mind of Margretta but that her anxious eyes were once more permitted to behold her long-lamented friend and benefactress, Mrs. Duncannon. Eagerly throwing open the door to receive her welcome guest, she replied, with uplifted hands—"Then my trust has not been in vain! Blessed lady, you are indeed come at last to comfort the wretched Margretta; deserted and forsaken, never, never did she so much need your goodness."

A second visitor had by this time made his appearance at the cottage door, with whom her sight was less familiar; drawing back, therefore, to a respectful distance, she begged the gentleman

would be pleased to walk in, if he could condescend to enter so poor a habitation as hers.

Mrs. Duncannon, who had hitherto kept silence, to enjoy Margretta's surprise, with her accustomed smile of benevolence said—" That gentleman has been too often your visitor to need an invitation now: is it possible you do not know Seymour Duncannon?"

Bewildered with joy at the unexpected appearance of his mother, and remembering Seymour only as a lovely boy of fifteen, it was not very surprising that Margretta should, at that moment forgetting the lapse of time, scarcely, in a tall elegant young man, recognize the boyish companion of Jessy; but an instant sufficed to recall the well-known features, which three years had ripened into manly beauty.

For *even* that space of time had passed over the events connected with our unvarnished tale, not because they were

were altogether devoid of interest, or that we might take advantage of the *eclat* with which an inimitable author delighted the imagination of her readers, by the novelty of her idea in leading them to a *retrospect* of the interesting incidents they were only anticipating in the perusal of her admirable though *simple story*, for those events must still be related to complete the work; and the author, writing only for the amusement of friends, kindly interested in the production of her pen, may be allowed to say, that her admiration of the elegant writer to whom she has alluded can only be exceeded by the humility which would restrain her from even the shadow of plagiarism. But as a detail of the real motives will only serve to lengthen a digression, for which she may even now be censured, she will, with permission, return to Donald's deserted cottage.

Not to dwell longer upon the astonish-

ment of Margretta at the alteration she beheld in Seymour, for it was already obliterated in the more powerful emotion of gratitude, which, for the moment, rendered her unmindful of her own altered condition, and the mournful story she had to explain, but for which Mrs. Duncannon was in part prepared, by the visible change she perceived in all around her. Unwilling to damp the tide of joy which their arrival had created, she suffered the delighted creature to ask a thousand questions, before she ventured one in return, till, unable longer to suppress her anxiety for Donald's welfare, she asked—"Was he not yet returned from his morning labour?"

Margretta, raising her eyes filled with tears, and, as if for the first time recollecting that Mrs. Duncannon had not, even in a distant country, heard her cause for sorrow, exclaimed, in a voice choked by convulsive sobs—"Ah, dearest

dearest madam! are you indeed a stranger to my heavy loss?"

Taking her hand, in the kindest accents of benevolence she replied—"I had certainly hoped, my good friend, to have found you, and the worthy Donald, happy as I left you—for many reasons I ardently wish it could have been so; but we are not to dispute the will of Heaven; and the use you make of that book," pointing to the still opened Bible, "convinces me you at least endeavour to bear its dispensations with fortitude."

"Oh! if it had been Heaven's will—if I had mourned him dead," she returned, interrupting her, "I would indeed have submitted without a murmur; I would have trusted that the same grave would soon have received us both, and could have patiently awaited my appointed hour; but to leave me, madam, without a cause—to forsake the aged wife, who had followed him by sea and

land, who would have died for him!—Did your ladyship believe Donald would have done this? Yet he has forsaken me, and you find your poor Margretta without a friend, husband, or child."

It was now Mrs. Duncannon's turn to become an astonished listener to a narrative, for which she was altogether unprepared, and in that astonishment Seymour was a deeply interested partaker. "What can you mean?" said the former; "but anxious as I am to learn what has befallen you, I must see you more composed before I can allow you to proceed."

"I will not distress you, madam," replied the honest creature, wiping her eyes; "for indeed I weep so often, that it is always now a relief to me to do so; but I must tell you my sad story."

"First," said Mrs. Duncannon, wishing to relieve, in some degree, the painful suspense of Seymour, "tell me how is the family at Dunwarden Castle?"

"'Tis

"'Tis some days, madam," she returned, "since I have seen any of them; but when lady Stewart last condescended to stop and ask me how I was, she was looking quite as ill as ever."

"Lady Stewart!" exclaimed Seymour, unable longer to suppress his impatience; "has lord Malcolm, then, left the castle? and what has become of the sweet Jessy?"

Mrs. Duncannon, too much agitated to speak, remained silent, while Margretta, interrupted in her own narrative, replied—"It is now, sir, nearly a year and a half since lord Malcolm gave up the castle to the rightful owners, who came, it is said, from a foreign country to take possession of it; but it should seem nobody can be happy who come to live in that great house; for though lord Stewart is a very good man—quite unlike the last lord who owned it, and her ladyship beloved by every body, and that they have besides a very fine young lady

lady living with them, still they have their troubles."

"But *Jessy?*" said Seymour, impatiently interrupting that part of the recital, in which he felt no interest; "why did Jessy go with the family, and leave you in distress?"

"Heaven bless her!" said the grateful Margretta, "she would have willingly staid with me, and shared my sorry fare; but lady Madeline entreated her with tears to go with her, and my dear unkind husband persuaded me it was our duty to let her stay in lord Malcolm's family, seeing that it was madam Duncannon's express desire, and that your ladyship would never forgive us, if we took her home; but I am still apt to think she would have been more happy with old Margretta, though she is not her mother, as your ladyship knows."

Seymour's astonishment had now reached its climax: rising from his chair with increased agitation, and at that instant forgetting

forgetting there was any person in the room privileged to ask questions besides himself, he was proceeding to continue his, when Mrs. Duncannon, anxious to turn his attention from words whose exact purport she did not wish him to understand, but with which she was well acquainted, hastily inquired—"Why she supposed Jessy was not quite happy in the protection of lady Madeline Sinclair?" at the same time expressing her approbation of Donald's conduct, in adhering to her advice at parting with him.

"Oh, it was all for the best, no doubt," replied Margretta; "and but for that bad young man, lady Madeline's son, my sweet child might have been as happy as the day was long, and with great good reason; for her ladyship, whom she loved next to yourself, madam, was one of the kindest, best creatures that ever lived. In that chair she would sit to talk of you and master

Seymour

Seymour by the hour together, and in that seat too I have seen her shed many a bitter tear after Mr. Sinclair came to our cottage."

Again Seymour's blood mounted to his manly cheek, and his expressive eyes bespoke the strong emotions of his soul; while Mrs. Duncannon, perceiving that Margretta's story grew more inexplicable, and that, if thus interrupted by the numerous questions they were each prompted to ask, she could never keep pace with their increasing suspense, or arrive at the sequel of what they were so desirous of hearing, with her accustomed presence of mind said—"Seymour, my love, as the good Margretta has so much information for us, it were better for the postillion to go forward, and refresh his horses, after which he may return to us for orders. In the mean time, she must be allowed to communicate all that has passed since we left the north, in her own way, and we will promise

mise not to break in upon the thread of her story."

"Thank you, madam," she returned, "and I will endeavour to tell you every thing as it passed, as exact as I can, but I am apt to be tedious, I know; and I have so many different things to think of, that when you or master Seymour, bless his sweet face! speak to me, I forget whereabouts I am, and I dare say tire your patience sadly."

Seymour, eager to hear this nevertheless dreaded story, flew instantly to execute Mrs. Duncannon's commands respecting the horses, and shortly returned, though not before, taking advantage of his temporary absence, she had entreated Margretta on no account to repeat, in his hearing, what, till then, he had never suspected—that she was not the mother of Jessy—"For I have," she continued, "many inquiries to make, before he is made acquainted with her little history, and must regret the inadvertency that

led

led you to name it, since in the present instance it can only give him pain."

Margretta expressed her sorrow at having, as she said, made such a blunder, and which she did not intend to do; and then prepared to satisfy her deeply interested auditors, by resuming her narrative—"When you first left us, madam," she said, "my poor Donald was very unhappy for several weeks—never returned from his work cheerful as he was wont to do, but sat silent and moping in his arm-chair, as if he had really known what afterwards happened—that you was not to return so soon as we all hoped and expected; but when he saw Jessy begin to smile again, and found that lady Madeline was not above bringing her to our poor hut, he got better, and things went on very well for some time, when her ladyship heard that Mr. Sinclair, her son, was taken very ill at school; and as she could not go so far to see him herself, Mr. Leopold was sent off, and

did

did not return for some weeks, when he left the young gentleman quite well. Some time after this, Mr. Leopold called at our place in a great hurry, and asked for Donald, who was not returned from work; but as he said he must see him directly, I told him where it was likely he would find my husband; and I saw him no more until Donald came home, and bade me prepare the little room where the children used to sleep, for a new lodger, a friend of Mr. Leopold's, who was coming to stop a short time with us, as he did not wish to take him to the castle, on lord Malcolm's account. And very late in the evening Mr. Leopold brought the stranger, whom he called his cousin, and begged I would make him as comfortable as I could—that his stay would be very uncertain, but as he wanted to live very private, not being in good health, he did not wish me to say who he was to any neighbour who might drop in. This I

promised,

promised, but asked—'What I was to say when lady Madeline called?' which he knew she frequently did. 'I will settle that,' he said, 'before she comes again.' This answer satisfied me. He then took his leave of the young man, promising to be with him early the next morning. He was scarcely gone when his cousin, as we supposed him to be, began asking a thousand questions of Donald, about the family at the castle, and if lord Malcolm was not a queer old hunks? the name he always called him by, even before we found out that he was his lordship's grandson, instead of Leopold's cousin, which we soon did, from the trouble he gave his good mother, whose heart he will certainly break."

"And this man," exclaimed Seymour, rising with emotion——

"Seymour," said Mrs. Duncannon, "remember our promise—I am not less interested than yourself in Margretta's recital,

recital, but she must not be interrupted."

Seymour resumed his seat in mournful silence, and Margretta proceeded—"Both Donald and myself took so great a dislike to him, for the rude manner in which he treated my poor Edward, and indeed at times ourselves, that but for offending her ladyship we would have entreated him to go elsewhere, but for her sake we dared not name it, when your letter arrived, and Jessy read it to us, by desire of lady Madeline. I shall never forget the pleasure our trouble seemed to give him, for he was in the room when she read it; and the thought of not seeing you again for so long a time nearly killed us with grief. Donald was quite miserable, and said he had lost his best—his only real friend, for he should never, never see you again, madam.—'Cheer up, old fellow,' cried the unfeeling creature, 'and never mind it: if you have lost one friend, you have found another

other—I will be your friend, and son too, if you will give me Jessy."

Seymour clenched his hand against his forehead, and Mrs. Duncannon, in pity to him, said—"This young gentleman does not appear to be worthy our notice, and is altogether a stranger to us, Margretta—we will hear more of him another time; for the present, we will thank you to speak only of those with whom we are better acquainted—I am impatient to hear more of Jessy and Edward."

"Ah, I told you, madam," she replied, "I should forget myself, and ramble out of the way; but, as your ladyship says, that worthless creature ought not to be thought of; and yet how can I ever forget him? Would I had never known him! and then though Donald has left me, Edward would have remained to comfort me—now he is at sea, and may never, never come back to his afflicted mother."

Again

Again she burst into tears; and Mrs. Duncannon, finding it was too great a task, even for her patience to wait Margretta's time for the elucidation of events, which became still more and more mysterious, changed her plan, and inquired—"If Donald had left his cottage before lord Malcolm gave up the castle, and if she knew what part of Scotland his lordship had removed to? as, although she had written several letters to lady Madeline during her residence abroad, no answers had ever reached her, and that she was becoming very impatient to know more of her old friends."

"Indeed, madam," she returned, "my troubles followed hard upon each other, as I told you: my poor boy fled from us to prevent his being sent to gaol for a crime of which he was innocent—but I will tell your ladyship the particulars another time. This happened just after the gentleman came to settle your business,

ness, and give up the house, which was afterwards taken by lord Stewart, who came, as I before told you, to own the castle, but he staid at the bourn side till every thing was got ready for him, after lord Malcolm had given it up; but I forgot to tell you, before they set out for Tantallan Castle, where they live now, the old steward died very suddenly, which, they said, gave his lordship much uneasiness."

"Indeed I am very sorry to hear of Sanford's death," said Mrs. Duncannon, musing intently as she spoke.

"But Donald—Ah, madam, then came my heavy trouble—my great loss! it was enough that my poor boy was gone—lost to me, but I must be separated from Jessy also! In a very short time after this I perceived Donald more restless than ever: he would look at me till his poor eyes filled with tears, and then say—'Margretta, how lonesome we are become! I have no longer any pleasure

sure in our little garden; for Edward is no longer present to help me to work in it, or Jessy to pick the flowers; and Mrs. Duncannon, master Seymour—all gone!' 'But they will come back again,' I said, eager to comfort him, though my own heart ached as I said it; 'madam will come to Scotland when her business is settled, and you are sure she will be pleased to find Jessy is with lady Madeline.'—'But we are getting old, Margretta,' he returned, 'and may not live to see that time; however, I have done as she desired me, and I hope it is all for the best.'—'Then why be so unhappy?' I replied; 'we are dull, to be sure, and cannot help feeling the loss of such friends, but we must now try to comfort each other as much as possible; 'tis but for a time, and we shall hear of them all from lady Madeline, for she promised we should; and we may get another letter from Edward;' for one of his messmates had been kind enough to

write just before this, madam, and said they were going on a cruize, but expected it would be a very short one, when we should hear from them again; 'and in that letter the kind boy sent a part of his wages, as you know, Donald,' I said; 'he begged us to be happy for his sake, and above all things to believe him innocent.'—'Yes,' said Donald, 'but if he is *not?*' Vexed that he should for a moment think so hardly of him, and satisfied myself that Mr. Sinclair was the father of Mary's child; for—Oh, madam, indeed I must tell you all about it: my poor Edward was wrongfully accused of basely betraying a neighbour's child, whom he loved dearer than himself; you, madam, knew Mary Ross when she was a virtuous good girl—Mr. Sinclair surely ruined her, and then more shamefully prevailed on her to assure her father that Edward was the villain. Unable to bear such bitter reproaches, and still loving

her

her to distraction, he left us in the dead of night, and his flight was considered certain proof of his guilt, even to those who at first believed him innocent. I know him to be so, and until now Donald had never doubted him; but when I would have reproached him for doing so, his lips trembled, and he looked so pale, I dared not say a word more. He soon afterwards went to his bed, and left it again, as usual, at break of day, from which time these eyes have never beheld him."

"Strange!" said Mrs. Duncannon, with much agitation; "he must have met with some accident."

"Oh no, madam," she returned, with renewed grief; "he had some motive for going, as you will see by this scrap of paper, which I found on the table," taking from her pocket a piece of leather, in which the relic was carefully wrapped. Satisfied it must throw some light on the strange incident, Mrs. Duncannon

hastily perused the few (and to her disappointment unintelligible) lines, over which Seymour also glanced his eager eyes; the imperfect contents, rendered almost illegible by Margretta's tears, were merely these:

"I must leave you, Margretta, for a few days; be comforted, then, until I get back, and take no notice whatever of my absence, as the business which takes me away from you concerns no one but ourselves, nor must I tell even you, until we meet again.

"DONALD."

More than ever bewildered, she replaced the mutilated paper in its envelope, and again turned her attention to the sequel of Margretta's story.

"For many days," she said, "I waited patiently for his return, but as the time

time passed on, my fears increased; the inquiries of my neighbours, and the strange remarks they made on my husband's going away, distracted me, and at last I fell sick—but no Donald returned to comfort me, as he had promised to do. During the time I lay ill, lady Stewart sent her housekeeper with nourishment for me, and to ask the particulars from myself, but I could tell her no more than her ladyship had heard from others, 'that I was a distressed woman, whom her husband had left without a cause;' but added, 'if lord Malcolm had remained at the castle, I should have had a kind benefactress in lady Madeline Sinclair, with whom one of my children was living.' Her ladyship kindly promised to write to lady Madeline, and acquaint her with my situation, as she knew where to direct to her; and I had shortly a message from her ladyship, begging me to keep up my spirits, as she had no doubt but that Donald

would yet return in safety; that in the meantime she had settled an allowance on me, which would help me for the present, and which lady Stewart would allow her housekeeper to pay me regularly, till I should hear of my husband; and concluded by assuring me that Jessy was in perfect health, but that, for fear of distressing her too much, she had not named Donald's departure, till it could be kept no longer from her. But I am still living a solitary forlorn creature, for Donald will never come back; Edward has never written since his father left me; and it is now many months since lady Stewart heard from lady Madeline; but she continues to pay my little stipend, which, together with my spinning, brings in more than I have occasion for, and I began to think it was not long I should want any thing; but since your ladyship and Mr. Seymour have really come back, who knows but I may live to see Jessy once more, and then

then I care not how soon I follow my poor Donald, for he must be dead, or nothing could keep him so long from me."

So thought Mrs. Duncannon, but willing to divert the attention of his deserted wife, she said—"A short time has wrought many changes, my good Margretta, and it may yet do much for your future comfort; at all events, it shall be my care to contribute any thing in my power towards it, and at least you shall be no longer a solitary being, if you prefer residing with me to remaining in the cottage. Your old friend, Gilbert, will be happy to see you, for he is still living, and will be no less concerned than myself at your misfortunes; but you find they are common to every state in life, for I think you told me lady Stewart was neither in health nor happy?"

"Neither, madam," she returned; "the young lady who is living with her

is not, I understand, her own; but she had a fine little boy, that they lost when quite a child, at the time of some dreadful battle in the town where they then lived."

"What do you mean?" said Mrs. Duncannon, with an emotion she vainly endeavoured to conceal from Seymour; "and where did it happen?"

"I never heard the name of the town, madam," returned Margretta, "but it was somewhere abroad, where the people all talk as most of her servants do. Now I think of it—I remember when they first came into this part, hearing Donald say, 'He wished master Seymour was at the bourn side, for he would understand all they said, because he could talk as they did."

More than ever agitated, Mrs. Duncannon replied—"Then they are French—is lady Stewart a foreigner too?"

Margretta said—"She talked English, but she did not look like an English lady;

lady; that she was in very ill health, and she did not think she would live many years, as it was not likely she would ever hear of her son now, and his loss was the cause of her extreme sorrow, as the servant who had charge of him was killed in the great confusion, and no one could give any account of the child; for I am told, madam, they were all obliged to leave their houses at dead of night, and go into the fields, and 'tis most likely the poor little boy was killed too; but lady Stewart will not believe it, because his body was not found with his nurse's the next day; but if he had been alive they must have found him."

The faintness which had seized Mrs. Duncannon now deprived her of the power to hear more, and leaning on Seymour's arm, she entreated him to lead her to the open air. Conjecturing that the same anxiety which oppressed him for the fate of Jessy had been too power-

ful for her more delicate feelings, he had no idea that she had taken even a stronger interest in the latter part of Margretta's story, to which, wholly engrossed by the first, he had scarcely attended. Margretta, terrified by the sudden indisposition, pained her by a thousand apologies for having fatigued her by talking so much; but Mrs. Duncannon kindly assured her it was far from being the case, and that finding herself much better, as the postillion was already in waiting, she should take leave of her until the following day, when she purposed being with her at an early hour, as she had still many inquiries to make.

Parting with friends she valued was become so serious a matter with Margretta, that the anxious look she gave Mrs. Duncannon seemed to imply a doubt, whether some unforeseen event might not deprive her of the promised comfort, even in so short a separation; and

and her kind benefactress, reading in the tearful eye what passed in her thoughts, assured her, that she designed this should be their last separation, as it was her intention to adjust matters in such a way, that she might leave the cottage, if she thought fit, on the following day; and having once more bid her a kind adieu, which was seconded by the now thoughtful Seymour, ascended the carriage, and Margretta returned to her little mansion, gratefully invoking Heaven for added blessings on her more than friend.

Throwing herself into the chair in which Donald had so often rested his wearied limbs after he returned from work, she endeavoured to compose he own thoughts, which the last two or three hours had totally bewildered. That Mrs. Duncannon had actually been with her, that she had seen master Seymour, and seen him so altered, appeared altogether a dream; that she was in future

to live with him, delightful; if she was sick, her best of friends would be nigh to comfort her—when she died, would perhaps close her eyes, and at last her presence would smooth the bed of death.

At that moment her eyes rested on the rude chimney-piece, over which, in proud pre-eminence, above the cups and saucers, so placed as to conceal how often they had been indebted to Margretta's skill in joining them, suspended by a piece of plaid ribbon, hung the plate which had decorated Donald's cap, when, in "martial trim tight," he had as a soldier few competitors in cleanliness or courage; in an instant she beheld him, in imagination, pale, in want, and sickness, creeping to the cottage, in expectation of the well-known welcome he should meet—refused admittance by those who might inhabit it when she was gone, and who could not even tell him where to find her; in agony of soul

she

she exclaimed—"Ungrateful creature that I am, to think of going! No, Donald, though you have so unkindly forsaken me, here I will stay: it may be, that I shall never bid you welcome home, but some kind neighbour will shew you where I am to be found, and tell you too, as you are looking on her cold grave, how sincerely she mourned for you." Relieved by the tears which followed this apostrophe, and which were so necessary to her full-fraught heart, she determined to thank Mrs. Duncannon for her kind offer, but to name also the reasons which prevented her from accepting it, and which she felt assured she would approve.

She now discovered, for the first time, what had before never occurred, that she was too old to travel about, could be of very little use to her benefactress, and never, she thought, should be happy when she had lost sight of the cottage, where she had passed so many years with

her

her once faithful Donald—'who may even yet return to it,' whispered the siren hope, that delusive phantom, who, linked with our existence, confined neither to age, rank, or abilities, invigorates youth, animates our pursuits through life, with some untasted, yet some promised blessing, yet unpossessed, and which, buoyant even in the care-worn breast, rescues the victim from the ruthless harpy despair. Margretta felt its benign influence, and the heart, become sick with expectation from hope deferred, again anticipated, again trusted; she knew that nothing was impossible to Him who orders all things, and once more she dared to believe, even Donald's return was probable.

CHAP-

CHAPTER X.

The distance from Donald's cottage to the inn where Mrs. Duncannon meant to remain during her intended stay in the north was short; but had it been much longer, it is more than probable neither she nor Seymour would have interrupted the profound silence which each preserved, until the carriage stopping in the inn-yard announced the end of their journey, so deeply were they engaged by their own thoughts of Margretta's long and interesting story. Seymour remembered no more than that Jessy was unhappy, and that unhappiness occasioned by a man of whose character he had heard sufficient to feel convinced

vinced he must be a villain, from whose power, perhaps, neither the protection of lady Madeline, nor the authority of lord Malcolm, might secure her; there was distraction in the idea; and in one moment the prompt ardour of nineteen had suggested many plans for her safety, which required only the wisdom of maturer years to regulate, or the power of possibility to perform.

Jessy, not less dear to the benevolent heart of Mrs. Duncannon, had been the first object of her solicitude, when she heard of her unexpected removal from the castle, where she had hoped to have still found her, and it was more on her account than any other she had taken her present journey; but Margretta had opened a new scene, in which a painful part was reserved for her to perform, in the contemplation of which she forgot every being but the one dearest to her in existence—the child whom she had reared with a mother's fondness, a Mentor's prudence

prudence—the child whose infantine caresses had given him a thousand claims upon her affection, whose society had divested solitude of every gloom, and whose rare qualities of mind and understanding had hitherto repaid, with so large an interest, her attentions to him—Seymour, the beloved boy from whom even a temporary separation was painful, she must now prepare to leave her, since she firmly believed the hand which brings mighty things to pass had already laid the foundation of a discovery that must finally separate them. No sooner, therefore, had they taken some refreshment, and the servants retired, than she led to the subject of their late visit, and the strange events which had taken place since they left the bourn side.—" 'Tis unfortunate," said Seymour.

" And yet I am satisfied," replied Mrs. Duncannon, " that some important motive must have induced him to leave that

that worthy creature, to whom, I know, he was so fondly attached," supposing her companion alluded to Donald's strange disappearance.

"I was thinking of Jessy," returned Seymour, perceiving her mistake, "and was regretting that Mr. Sinclair did not come into this part of the country before we left it, in which case I might have prevented——"

"What?" said Mrs. Duncannon, interrupting him; "not his being a bad character, or Jessy going with the family, as you know I had urgent reasons for wishing her to remain with them, though there were also motives which restrained me from making you acquainted with my reasons; but the period is at hand, my dear boy, in which I shall have to explain mysteries still more important to yourself."

Seymour looked surprised, but answered—"Of whatever nature they may be, my dear madam, I am persuaded they

they can never render either you or myself less interested in the fate of that amiable girl—Pardon me if I add, should that be possible, I am satisfied still to remain ignorant of them."

"But were I to suffer you to do so," returned Mrs. Duncannon, "I should neither act up to my duty as a Christian nor your friend, still less should I merit the filial affection that has for so many years actuated your grateful heart towards me. Hitherto you have been satisfied with the mode of life in which you have been educated; I also have been rendered happy from the conviction, that a recent event has enabled me to place your future lot in life beyond mediocrity; but tell me, Seymour, what would you think of her who, thus professing to be your friend, would calmly suffer you to retain only a genteel competency, when lawfully entitled both to rank and fortune?"

"What

"What do you mean, madam?" said the astonished Seymour, already shrinking from an explanation that he foresaw was to prepare him for some strange event, and which, for the first time, brought to his recollection the conversation which had passed between Mrs. Duncannon and Margretta respecting lady Stewart.

"I mean," she replied, "that I have every reason to believe the mystery attached to your birth is about to be elucidated—that I who have so long watched over your growing virtues must now resign you to her who has passed that period in hopeless sorrow; for too surely, Seymour, lady Stewart is your maternal mother. Perhaps at the early age in which destiny consigned you to my care, it would have been easy to deceive you into a belief that your natural parents were no more; but I was actuated by no such selfish motive, and we have often,

often, you know, conversed upon the singular event which has been productive of so much happiness to myself."

"Say not to yourself only, my more than mother!" exclaimed the agitated Seymour; "I also have been too happy, in the possession of such a friend, to desire a change; I have no recollection of another parent, nor can my imagination picture a being who would so well have supplied your place. You have told me that the true value of riches is to be content with whatever Providence has bestowed. Ambition, beyond that of meriting the esteem of good men, was a sentiment never fostered in Seymour's heart; for him, therefore, a title has no peculiar charm, and that which is to separate him from you must be purchased at the sacrifice of his happiness. Why then tell me of lady Stewart? Time must have long since weakened every claim I had upon her maternal af-

fections,

fections, while it daily cemented that which will bind me to you for ever."

"There, at least, Seymour, you are unjust," returned Mrs. Duncannon, before he could proceed, "for had you been as deeply interested in Margretta's account of lady Stewart as myself, you would have discovered proofs that *a mother cannot* forget her child—that her ladyship's health has been the severe forfeit of your loss—and that, in addition to this testimony of her maternal virtue, she is said to be a character worthy of esteem, of course entitled to more than common affection from a son whom she has never ceased to mourn as dead to her. Shall I own, that from you I expected more noble sentiments? and while I make every allowance for the strength of affection which has, in the present moment, carried you beyond yourself, pardon me if I say you have not acted with your usual firmness of mind."

Seymour

Seymour felt the just reproof, kindly as it was worded, and having affectionately pressed the hand extended to him, replied—" I ought to have known such hasty expressions would have been condemned by your more correct judgment; they were not your sentiments; and the child whom you have reared and educated, in whose mind you have studied to inculcate the pure morals which actuated your own, ought never to breathe an expression derogatory to such precepts. I am sensible of my error, but henceforth I will prove to you that the impetuosity of a moment may be cancelled by the effect of reason, and will dare to trust, that if put to the test, I shall not be found less wanting in my duty towards those whom nature has given claims upon me, than I have hitherto been in affection to her whose gratitude was the tie. But tell me," he continued, " dearest madam, why are you so satisfied that I am really the son

of

of lady Stewart? and how do you propose ascertaining the painful truth? for I yet shrink from the eclaircissement. Have you sufficient proofs to substantiate my claims? Should lord Stewart for a moment suppose me an impostor, how could I support the humiliating idea, even though it should still leave me the enviable distinction of being your adopted son! Would it not be better to defer the mysterious explanation?"

"Decidedly not," returned Mrs. Duncannon, with the promptitude that marked all her actions; "delays, Seymour, are at all times dangerous, and mine was never a procrastinating spirit. In the present instance, too much may be gained to warrant my evading a conference with lord and lady Stewart beyond that of a few hours. If I can give health and happiness, life's choicest blessings, to a fellow-creature—if I may be the means of restoring you to parents worthy of such a child, and see you, through my means, in

in possession of rank and affluence—tell me, Seymour, shall I not have lived long enough?"

"No, my invaluable friend," he returned, again clasping her hand in his, "you must live to share with your devoted Seymour the blessings you appear to estimate so highly; you must do more—you must give me also a right to share with the second child of your affection this expected abundance of wealth and honours, which have no charm but as they may contribute to the comfort of those I love."

"Surely, Seymour," said Mrs. Duncannon, gravely, "the events of this day have laid open every avenue of your heart to that romantic ardour too incident to your age, but which your maturer reason has hitherto appeared to hold in subjection; remember this is the first moment you have ever thought fit to be so explanatory upon a subject I was of all others the least prepared for;

 I regret

I regret your having introduced it at all, but more so at a time when I had hoped your mind wholly engrossed by a circumstance of so much more importance—that of regaining a father and mother; but as you have been so explicit on your part, it is my duty to be equally so in return. In the first place, know then, that as the daughter of Donald and Margretta, Jessy would never be considered a suitable match for the heir of lord Stewart—and that you are so, concomitant circumstances leave me no reason to doubt; nor has your pride any cause for alarm, when I aver that I *am* prepared for every scrutiny that may be made relative to your pretensions on that family; but supposing Jessy *not* the child of those worthy cottagers, my influence over her is past, nor would it longer remain with me to dispose of her hand, even should I hereafter sanction what I now term a mere boyish absurdity

surdity—pardon the expression, and let the only confidence I am yet at liberty to repose in you respecting that good girl erase the remembrance, if it sounded harshly. Jessy was consigned to the care of Donald, was nursed at the breast of Margretta, and she owes them gratitude, but not her being; shall I tell you, I have my doubts if she is not even nobly born; but the cloud which envelopes her fate is almost impenetrable; and yet I have reason to believe, that were it even partially removed, more obstacles to your present wishes might be presented than already stand confessed in the supposed offspring of the peasant Donald. If, therefore, you value your own honour, never let the avowal you have made me reach the object of our mutual esteem: it may, nay would, injure her peace of mind, but could avail little towards your own happiness. Leave to time what neither my friendship for either of you, your own perseverance, nor the power of

lord Stewart, should he meditate it to please you, could effect. I know my language is ambiguous, and I would gladly render it otherwise, but that at present is impossible; let us therefore dismiss a subject which can only be unsatisfactory to both, and return to that which it is my intention to have finally adjusted in the course of to-morrow, at least as far as relates to an interview with lord and lady Stewart. As you are already acquainted with the circumstances which first introduced to my acquaintance a lovely boy, whose lisping tongue, and not his judgment, greeted me with the endearing appellation of dear mamma, it remains only then to say, I have carefully preserved the dress you wore, and which will, no doubt, forcibly occur to the recollection of lady Stewart, who can need no other conviction, added to the horrors of that memorable night, which I can so well describe, and which will ever remain

strongly

strongly impressed upon the memory of every being connected with it. I shall proudly resign my charge, so worthy of their future care—but oh, my Seymour, with what rapture must a mother, a delighted father, acknowledge such a child! A conviction of their joy should reconcile me to your loss, and I must learn to bear the privation of your society with becoming fortitude."

"But Jessy," said Seymour, mournfully, "will supply my loss—on her you will continue to bestow the endearing attentions once divided between us—I only shall be far away. Oh, my inestimable friend! teach me, if indeed we must part, in pity teach me to forget the years of felicity gone past for ever."

"Time, my dear Seymour," she returned, "will soften the remembrance of them to a pleasing dream, to which memory will sometimes revert, *I trust*, with a gratifying pleasure; for I should unwillingly lose the affectionate interest

I hold in your heart, and have studied that heart too long, to believe it could wish to erase the remembrance of a friend so long loved.—But 'tis time to recollect that, as travellers, some degree of rest is requisite to the body, if our minds have been too actively employed to remind us that, by these unseasonable hours, we are not only infringing upon our own health, but also upon the natural rest of our good host and his family, who are, no doubt, quietly napping by the fireside; we will therefore retire, but remember it must be to sleep, and not to ruminate on the events of the day, if we would be prepared for the business of to-morrow."

Seymour smiled his assent to the proposal, but his lips refused to seal the promise she required; he felt that the multiplicity of ideas, which at once crowded on his vivid imagination, could not admit of his sleeping; yet he ardently desired to seek his pillow, on which he thought

thought it would be possible to arrange them in some form, for now all was confusion. When there, he endeavoured to think only of the change in his own destiny, because reason told him it was a point of duty he owed to the sorrowing lady Stewart; but duty had a powerful rival to contend with—the artless Jessy presented claims on his youthful and ardent mind, prior to those of a mother whom as yet he knew not; and Jessy, unprotected, in the power of such a man as Sinclair, her mysterious destiny, his own future separation from her, pressed foremost in his now harassed mind—they were subjects not to be disregarded; and morning found him only more anxiously interested for her, and less mindful of his own fate.

Mrs. Duncannon, on the contrary, adoring the inscrutable ways of Providence, fully persuaded that she should live to see the beloved being, for whom she thought no station too exalted, the

avowed acknowledged heir of a noble house, and delighted to become the happy instrument of restoring a long-lost child to a fond mother, had passed some hours in that peaceful sleep known only to the guileless, when Seymour, in passing her door to the breakfast-room, tapped gently, and inquired if she was not yet stirring? His summons was quickly attended to; but although his languid look when they met bespoke his disobedience of her commands, she purposely avoided making the remark, assumed more than usual cheerfulness, and gaily asked if he was ready to attend her to Margretta's cottage, where she purposed calling previous to her visiting Dunwarden Castle? The name brought a deeper tinge on his youthful countenance, and without waiting to hear more, he said—"Surely, my dear madam, you will not compel me to be present at a meeting which is to decide my future destiny? It will be sufficient

to

to know I *must* go there when the die is cast; but indeed I cannot see lord and lady Stewart until I have prepared myself to meet them as a son ought to meet his natural parents."

"That shall be as you please," replied Mrs. Duncannon, "if such a preparation is now requisite on your part; I must not, however, as I intended, leave you with Margretta, as that good creature, in the abundance of what she will still find to communicate, will, I fear, leave you but little leisure to prepare for this interview, of which you are so apprehensive."

Seymour, delighted to have obtained even a temporary reprieve, promised to hold himself in readiness for any message of which she might be the herald, upon her return; and Mrs. Duncannon, having passed a short time only with Margretta, set out alone for Dunwarden Castle.

As the carriage drove up the avenue, her heart palpitated alternately

with hope and fear; she was a stranger to lord and lady Stewart—had no other evidence of their child's existence than her own conviction that Seymour must be the same, and the clothes he wore, to which no other ornament was attached than the small gold clasps in his shoes, on which, elegantly engraved, were the cyphers H. M.; these she constantly kept with a few valuable trinkets that were at this time in her travelling trunk; the clothes were left at her late residence, but she could minutely describe their form and texture; of the night too, on which Seymour was found, she could also give such a description, that did it correspond with that on which lady Stewart lost her son, no farther evidence could be required to substantiate his pretensions; and, firm in the rectitude of her own intentions, she prepared, with a firm mind, having introduced herself, to explain the purport of her visit.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XI.

ALTHOUGH we have left little to anticipate in the short history of Mrs. Duncannon's life, by having more than once avowed that no peculiar mystery was attached to it, she has of necessity been too long a leading character in the work, not to have excited, in the minds of some who may peruse it, a wish to be still better acquainted with her. To the circumstance of her having fixed upon such a residence as the bourn side, lord Malcolm, misled by her polished manners, and still more elegant endowments of mind, had attached more importance than was actually the case; yet, as that motive must be explained at some pe-

riod of the tale, it will probably never be more appropriate than in the present instance.

From a mother, exemplary in every point of duty which pertains to the wife and Christian, Mrs. Duncannon derived the mild virtues which adorned her own character—the soul-inspiring wish of doing good, the philanthropy that made her a blessing to her fellow-creatures, the sympathy which dried the tear of sorrow, the heart which, feeling so exquisitely the woes of others, bore its own without a murmur, and the meek forbearance that pardoned every injury. But the strength of mind so uncommon to her sex—that firmness of soul that would have enabled her to bear with even Spartan fortitude every trial—*these* she inherited from a father who had fought his country's battles upon the trackless ocean—the faithless *element* that, having so often borne testimony to his deeds of more than mortal valour, marked

marked his triumphant flag proudly wave amidst the hostile fleet, and dashed its foaming waves against his stately vessel, could at last unrelenting gape its destructive jaws, and hurl to its bottomless abyss such a man, his gallant dauntless crew, and such a vessel, of which no vestige told the fatal story—no brave follower of the intrepid sailor escaped to confirm the awful truth, that a star in Britain's hemisphere had set in night—a hero was for ever lost to his country—a father, husband, friend, and patriot, numbered with the dead; for of the gallant Douglas there remained only the laurel wreath that never dies, and the offspring to whom his fame had given consequence, his success ample wealth.

Over those children, Mrs. Duncannon and an only brother, his now widowed Helen watched with maternal anxiety, and for their sakes only she wished to live. But the dreadful certainty too soon completed what cruel

suspense

suspense had begun; days, weeks, and months, heavily moving onward, sometimes whispered all things were possible, but succeeding years destroyed the fond delusion—Douglas returned no more; and although the *mother* would have lived, there was in existence no charm for the widowed *wife;* and her death consigned the infant possessor of her name and virtues to the joint care of a guardian, who knew not how to appreciate the value of his charge, and a brother still less worthy such a sister. The former, when the brave Douglas had deputed him the protector of his children, in the event of his being taken from them, was an industrious merchant, in whom he judged honesty to be a leading characteristic; his plain and simple manners had always pleased him, while his indefatigable perseverance in business induced him to believe his children's property would eventually benefit by falling into the hands of such a man, whose

own

own success in life left nothing to apprehend from his misusing the fortune committed to his care. But Moreland, *determined* on acquiring wealth, and the wealthy *Moreland*, possessed of unbounded riches, were different *men:* industry having completed its task, resigned the reins to ambition; many were the merchants who could vie with him in wealth, but a *title* would at all times give him a proud pre-eminence over those favoured sons of fortune.

Hitherto " no grants of royal donors" had ennobled the blood of his ancestors, whom he had no desire of tracing beyond his paternal grandfather; but it was yet in his power to purchase the gilded pill, which would give to *his* posterity the envied privilege of boasting, that *they* at least were the descendants of a great man. The title obtained, he would marry; and *both* were accomplished in the same year which had marked the inauspicious fate of his friend,

friend, the worthy and lamented Douglas. A needy woman of fortune was not long wanting to share the splendid fortune and dignity of sir Arthur, whose first step, having assumed his name, was to reform his plebeian manners: dissipation was requisite to polish what she had so charitably taken in hand—it would give an easy freedom to his manners, improve his conversation, and, above all, allow her ample scope for the vicious indulgences which custom had made habitual to her.

Under such admirable tuition, sir Arthur became daily more popular; but he could not always suppress a deep-drawn sigh, when he ventured to examine the declining state of his coffers, upon which the gaming-table was no inconsiderable drawback. To argue with lady Moreland was impracticable; she despised meanness—every body knew they were monied people—she had always been accustomed to style, and profusion

fusion was absolutely requisite to support the consequence of a title to which no pedigree was attached—"But our children," he ventured to say, one evening when she had been importuning him for a sum of money which he declared himself incapable of advancing; "some provision ought to be made for them."

"Certainly, sir Arthur," said his thoughtless wife; "but as there will be a long minority for that provision to accumulate when they are actually here, I am of opinion that it will be quite time enough to lay by that sum when they make their appearance; in the interim, I have no idea of giving up our own comfort for the anticipation of what is at present a more than probable uncertainty."

Sir Arthur silently bit his lips, and lady Moreland, pettishly turning on her heel, left him to his own reflections. They were long since become even more

unpleasant

unpleasant companions than her ladyship; and having no pre-engagement that could save him from their intrusion, he proceeded to the gaming-house, partly to avoid the silent monitor, who became daily more importunate, and still more, with a hope of realizing the sum of ready money which the profligate lady Moreland had insisted upon having by the next night; but fortune, who had so often smiled upon the industrious merchant, disregarded the anxious look and trembling solicitude of the needy gamester—she had once been Moreland's good genius, but was now his evil one, and in vain he implored her favours, in vain invoked the benefits he merited not; and never had he returned so dispirited, for never before had he, at one time, lost so large a sum, or could so ill dispense with what he had lost.

Disappointment goaded him, but still more he dreaded the angry reproaches of his incensed wife, from which there

there was but one method of escape, and from that resource he shrunk with horror, repelled the unjust idea with manly firmness, yet required strength of mind to parry the deliberation which followed. It yet wanted some months of the period in which Archibald Douglas would be authorized to claim his paternal fortune, and three years were also wanting to complete the age in which the amiable Helen would be entitled to the same privilege; in much less time he could reimburse the sum, which would at that moment be such an accommodation; and who could know he had borrowed it?

At that instant, the well-remembered form of the just, the upright Douglas, darted on his yet irresolute mind—it was a tacit reproach for his meditated breach of trust; but he had deliberated too long—necessity triumphed over rectitude—the fatal sum was appropriated to the shameful purposes of the worthless lady Moreland. Again her ladyship smiled with

ineffable

ineffable sweetness on her deluded partner, and again, dragged through the brilliant blaze of a crowded ball-room by his fashionable and pretty wife, sir Arthur for a time forgot that he had been an unjust steward to the departed Douglas.

About this time Helen having completed her education, was removed to her guardian's house, to witness scenes altogether new to her excellent understanding: disgusted with the avowed levity of lady Moreland, and more disappointed than she was willing to acknowledge, even to herself, in the man whom her revered father had selected as worthy the trust reposed in him, she could only wonder that Archibald should see nothing in either to condemn; on the contrary, was a professed admirer of her ladyship, whom he could attend upon all occasions as the ward of sir Arthur, without incurring censure, and prided himself upon believing he knew perfectly well how to manage

manage the old gentleman, who liberally entertained his companions, without inquiring into their respective merits, or the propriety of their acquaintance for Archibald, provided they were young men of rank or fashion, which lady Moreland always determined; if therefore they passed her ordeal, they needed no other passport. But of her brother's many favourites, and lady Moreland's delightful creatures, as she termed those who rated highest on her list of agreeables, Charles Moncrief, a *protégée* of her brave father, claimed the decided preference with Helen; they had passed the days of infantine fondness together, and parted only when the loss of admiral Douglas, and the education of his children, had obliged them to do so.

Charles had left the academy, where both had been placed, some years before his friend Archibald, as it was requisite he should enter the navy at an early age, an arrangement which best suited the

the small portion on which he was to be educated. By the endearing appellation of son, Helen remembered frequently to have heard her gallant father address Charles; to become such to him, he had aspired at a very early age; and though he had made some voyages since that period, a few interviews served to convince his lovely friend, that his heart "untravelled, still returned to her." Neither did time or absence appear to have aught diminished the friendship subsisting between Archibald and himself: every interval he could spare from duty was spent in the society of his early companions, and every day served but to attach him more fondly to Helen, who was, however, too fair, rich, and amiable, not to leave him many competitors for such a prize; and of all their most favoured visitors, Dorville appeared to be most respected. The reputed heir of a large estate, handsome in person, and far more accomplished than many

of

of the young men she was in the constant habit of associating with, Helen regarded his attentions with evident satisfaction, but that regard extended no farther than what she believed due to his merits: his superiority over Charles Moncrief consisted only in the point of fortune; but she had herself sufficient for both, and hers she had already determined Charles should become the possessor of, whenever she was at liberty to accompany the gift with her hand, which he had ardently solicited, but which she chose should never depend upon the caprice of a guardian, who might raise obstacles to her union, and would, she had every reason to expect, object to the poverty of Charles Moncrief. On *his* faith she had a firm reliance; her own stability was no less to be depended on; and the period of her minority would soon pass over, when she determined nothing should frustrate her intentions, or retain her an eye-witness of the eternal

discord

discord that reigned in sir Arthur's house. But when Dorville, flattered by Helen's friendly manner towards him, and encouraged by her brother, who sought the alliance with avidity, entreated her own and guardian's permission to avow himself her declared admirer, she entreated him never to renew a subject which must be unsatisfactory to both; that at present she had no intention whatever of changing her situation, still less of accepting him as a lover, whom she had nevertheless highly esteemed as a friend, and should still continue to do so, if his future conduct did not oblige her to change her sentiments, and which she had too just a sense of his probity to suppose could ever be the case.

Dorville, thus rejected when he was least prepared for a refusal, retired in all the bitterness of disappointment, keenly to reproach Archibald for having deceived him into a belief that his sister's affections were disengaged, since his own vanity

vanity sufficed to convince him only a prior engagement could have induced Miss Douglas to reject his overtures.

Archibald was no stranger to the mutual affection of Charles and Helen; and there *had* been a time when he would have anticipated their future union with heartfelt satisfaction, both from a knowledge of his friend's worth, and the respect his honoured father bore him; but he had himself raised a barrier, which it was now necessary to his honour to uphold—not that he esteemed Charles less, but that his own extravagance and inordinate love of play had made him too considerable a debtor to Dorville, not to oblige him openly to espouse his cause: the hand of Helen was to cancel the debt of honour which he had scarcely any other means of paying; for though the period of settlement with sir Arthur was still procrastinated from various causes, he well knew full possession of his property was insuffi-

cient to satisfy the heavy demands he had on it, without compelling him to retrench a style of living which was become necessary to his comforts. The motives therefore which had induced him to make a promise so requisite to the happiness of Dorville was too ostensible to be laid aside by the mere negative of Helen; and new plans were had recourse to, which could hardly fail of insuring success.

A long and private interview with sir Arthur so far arranged matters, that Archibald flew to communicate the success to Dorville, whose perseverance in the cause was stimulated by the stab his pride had sustained, and who eagerly agreed to adopt any plan which might enable him to subdue the cold unfeeling Helen, who he determined should eventually become his wife. Unconscious that she had in the world an enemy capable of undermining her peace, still less that her brother could be that demon,

and

and too noble-minded to wound the feelings of Charles by naming so powerful a rival as Dorville, she had never led to the subject of his declaration, of which Moncrief had no suspicion, when called upon to prepare for a voyage, the destination and length of which was at that time uncertain; but the strength of mind Helen ever evinced upon these occasions strengthened his security in her affections: he should probably return rich in fortune's favours—at all events, might become her happy husband before his country again demanded his services.

Previous to his embarkation, much of their time was spent together, and lady Moreland sometimes ventured to accuse him of monopolizing too much of Miss Douglas's company; but as he always parried her raillery with some well-timed compliment, her ladyship only regretted that so fine a fellow should be so poor, and hoped her sweet Helen

would not let his many accomplishments render her unmindful that fortune should be the first consideration.

Helen, by no means disposed to make a confident of such a character, merely said—"In her acquaintance with Mr. Moncrief, she regarded only the good qualities which had, at an early age, secured him her father's unlimited affection, and could not fail to insure a continuance of his children's esteem."

Only a few days previous to his sailing, they had stopped, in a morning's ride, to take from a jeweller's in the city a miniature of Moncrief, which had been left there for the purpose of being set.

Charles only alighted, had obtained the picture, and was leaving the shop, when a woman of genteel appearance, evidently in ill health, and carrying an infant in her arms, passed the door, when suddenly returning, she accosted him. Helen, who from the carriage observed the interview, but too distant for the voice

voice of either to reach her ear, was nevertheless struck with the apparent embarrassment of Charles as he looked towards her, while still in earnest conversation with his companion, who at least appeared no stranger to him. Having given her a card on which he had previously written something in pencil, he hastily re-entered the carriage, and apologized for having detained her so long; but the face which had been turned as he ascended the steps wore too expressive marks of sorrow not to powerfully interest the feelings of Helen; and her first question was, if the person who had thus detained him was a stranger in distress?

Evidently confused by the inquiry, he answered—"It would be false, Helen, to say I have not seen her before, but she is unfortunately a character which the purity of your heart must ever make a stranger to you; and yet she is entitled to your warmest pity, for she was once innocent

innocent as you are. More it is not requisite, my sweet friend, you should know."

Helen knew not suspicion, and mean curiosity was a sensation still less familiar to her; having therefore half suppressed the truant sigh, which was the sympathizing echo of that Charles had unconsciously heaved as he ceased speaking, she relieved him by asking for the picture, which afforded conversation until they reached home.

END OF VOL. I.

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